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A VIEW

OF THE

DOCTRINES AND DUTIES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

IN *FORTYNINE DISCOURSES* ON

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE to the EPHESIANS.

WITH A

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE

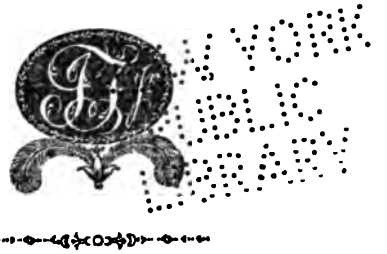
ON THE

EVIDENCES OF THE GOSPEL,

ESPECIALLY THOSE DERIVED FROM THE

Converſion, Miniſtry and Writings of that Apoſtle.

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PREFACE.

THE author of the following work has made it a frequent practice, in the courſe of his miniſtry, to ſelect, for the ſubject of his public diſcourſes, a large portion of ſcripture, a number of chapters in a book, a whole book, or *Epiſtle*, going through it, paragraph by paragraph, in order. From this method of preaching he has contemplated theſe two advantages:—The preacher will thus be led to treat on ſome ſubjects, which, in the ordinary way of ſelection, might be overlooked; and he will exhibit the connected train of reaſoning which runs through the book, and thus will lead his hearers to obſerve the connexion and argumentation of ſcripture in their private reading.

AMONG the books ſelected for the ſubjects of a ſeries of diſcourſes, that entitled "*The Epiſtle to the Epheſians*," is one. Whether this Epiſtle was originally written *to* the *Epheſians*, as is generally ſuppoſed; or written to the *Laodiceans*, and from them conveyed, by copy, to the *Epheſians*, as ſome have conjectured, is a queſtion, not neceſſary here to be diſcuſſed; for on the deciſion of this queſtion neither the genuineneſs, nor uſefulneſs of the Epiſtle will depend. The reaſons for the former opinion will be found in HAMMOND, WHITBY,* and other commentators; the reaſons for the latter may be ſeen in PALEY's Horæ Paulinæ.

THIS Epiſtle is more replete with ſentiment, and enriched with a greater variety of matter, than Paul's other Epiſtles, and, perhaps, than any other book in the ſacred volume. It is a compendium of the goſpel. In diſcourſing upon it, the author of the enſuing ſermons, has ob-

* The Publiſher of this work has juſt reprinted WHITBY's DISCOURSES, which are to be ſold by him in Worceſter.

ſerved its order, attended to its connexion, elucidated from ſcripture, eſpecially from Paul's other writings, the paſſages which ſeemed obſcure, noticed every ſubject which it preſented to him, and treated the whole in a familiar and practical manner, that the work might be adapted to every capacity, and to general uſefulneſs.

He will not call this a *complete* body of divinity; for it is not caſt into a ſyſtematic form, nor does it contain *every* ſubject, which might be expected in a *complete* ſyſtem. But moſt of the ſubjects, which *peculiarly* belong to the *Chriſtian* ſcheme, as diſtinct from natural religion, are here ſtated and explained, if not in the ſyſtematic order, yet in the order in which the Apoſtle has placed them.

Some ſubjects, on which the author has before publiſhed his ſentiments, as baptiſm, the church, and the diſcrimination between true and falſe teachers, are here paſſed over in a ſummary way, leſt this work ſhould be too voluminous; and it is probable that of thoſe, who have not condeſcended to read his former publications, few will think this worthy of their peruſal.

The prevalence of infidelity, in the preſent day, ſuggeſted the propriety of prefixing to this work a preliminary diſcourſe on the Divine Authority of the Goſpel, and particularly on the genuineneſs and authenticity of the writings aſcribed to St. Paul.

This work, which was, in a courſe of Sermons, laid before the people to whom the author ſtands immediately related, is now humbly preſented to the public, with his ardent wiſhes and prayers that the bleſſing of God may accompany it.

SERMON I.

An INTRODUCTORY SERMON *on the* EVIDENCES *of the* GOSPEL, *and the* GENUINENESS *of* PAUL'S EPISTLES.

ACTS xxvi. 16, 17.

I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those in which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee;———



PAUL, in the preceding verses, declares before Agrippa, the time and manner of his conversion to the faith of Christ, and the extraordinary circumstances which attended it. And, in the words now read, he subjoins an account of the commission, which he received from Christ, to preach his gospel among the Jews, and especially among the Gentiles.

The ſingular method, which Jeſus took, to convince Paul of the truth of the goſpel, was not out of partial favor to him, for ſurely he had done nothing to recommend himſelf, but rather out of a general benevolence to mankind; for this man was a choſen veſſel—a ſuitable inſtrument to convey Chriſt's name among them. Jeſus miraculouſly appeared to him to make him a miniſter of the goſpel, and a witneſs of thoſe facts by which its truth is ſupported. And having furniſhed him for his work, Jeſus ſent him forth to publiſh the doctrines, and diſplay the evidences of the goſpel among the people of the Jews, and among the Heathen nations.

The words teach us, that "the Apoſtle Paul was a notable and illuſtrious inſtrument in ſpreading the knowledge and confirming the truth of the religion of Chriſt." Such he appears from the hiſtory given of him in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and from the writings which he himſelf has left for the uſe of the church.

My deſign is to give a ſummary view of the evidences of Chriſtianity, and particularly to illuſtrate the evidences derived from the converſion, preaching and writings of this eminent miniſter and witneſs.

The Chriſtian religion does now exiſt, and for many ages it has exiſted in the world. To account for its exiſtence, without admitting its truth, it is impoſſible: For it did not take place by the influence of human authority, or the terror of military power; but by familiar inſtructions and obvious miracles. The credit of it depends on theſe plain facts—that about eighteen hundred years ago, there aroſe in Judea an extraordinary perſon, called Jeſus of Nazareth, who declared himſelf to be divinely ſent into the world, as an inſtructor, reformer and ſavior of men—that he lived a moſt virtuous and holy life—that he taught a religion in

ſome reſpects new, in many reſpects more perfect than had ever been taught before, and in all reſpects pure and excellent—that he wrought many great and aſtoniſhing miracles—that he foretold many things, humanly improbable, which were verified in event—that he ſuffered death by a public crucifixion, and, on the third day, roſe again, and appeared to many in different times and places, not only to ſingle perſons, but to companies, and to more than five hundred at once, and frequently to thoſe who had moſt intimately known him before his death, and who conſequently could not miſtake another perſon for him—that after about forty days, he, in the preſence of a large concourſe of diſciples, viſibly aſcended on high, and diſappeared from the admiring ſpectators—that, ſoon after this, according to his previous promiſe, the diſciples whom he had choſen to be the witneſſes of his works and the miniſters of his word, were endued with extraordinary gifts, qualifying them to go forth and proclaim his religion in the world.

If ſuch facts as theſe did really exiſt, the religion of the goſpel is indubitably true. They who diſbelieve the goſpel, muſt deny that there ever was ſuch a man, or that he ever wrought ſuch miracles, and died and roſe again in the manner alledged.

Miracles, which are effects produced above the common powers, and in a way different from the ſtated courſe of nature, plainly diſcover God's immediate interpoſition. From the goodneſs and veracity of God, we may conclude, that he never will immediately interpoſe to give ſuch credibility to a falſehood, that men, inquiring honeſtly, and judging rationally, muſt receive it as a truth.

The miracles of Chriſt, (admitting, for the preſent, the Chriſtian hiſtory to be true) were great and numerous; and he conſtantly appealed to them as evidences of the divinity of his miſſion and doc-

trines. To ſuppoſe, that, in ſuch a caſe, God ſhould enable an impoſtor to perform theſe marvellous works, which are related of Jeſus, is contrary to all our ideas of the divine character.

They who ſaw Chriſt heal the ſick, raiſe the dead, caſt out devils, and ſtill the ſtorms—they who ſaw him yield himſelf to death, and then, exactly according to his prediction, return from the grave, aſcend into heaven, and ſhed down on his diſciples the promiſed gifts of his ſpirit—eſpecially they who felt themſelves partakers of theſe wonderful gifts, could not doubt, but that he was, what he declared himſelf to be, the Son of God and the Savior of men, and that his religion was a heavenly inſtitution.

The diſciples of Jeſus, (allowing that there were ſuch perſons) were credible witneſſes of theſe facts; for they related them as matters which fell under their own obſervation. That which they ſaw and heard, they declared to the world. Whether they really ſaw the dead ariſe, the ſick and lame reſtored to health and ſoundneſs, thouſands fed with a few ſmall loaves; whether they themſelves were able to work miracles and ſpeak with divers tongues; whether Jeſus, who was crucified, actually aroſe and appeared to them; whether they converſed with him, ſaw his wounds and heard his inſtructions; were facts in which they could not be deceived. If, then, their relation was not true, they muſt have intended to deceive mankind.

But it is not conceivable, that they ſhould have ſuch a diſhoneſt intention: For by their teſtimony to the miracles and reſurrection of Chriſt, they expoſed themſelves to poverty, reproach, miſery and death. And it cannot be imagined, that a number of men ſhould deliberately aſſociate to ſacrifice every thing that is dear in life, and even life itſelf, for the ſake of impoſing on the world a falſehood, which never could do mankind or themſelves any

good—that they ſhould perſevere in this deſign after they began to feel its conſequences—that they ſhould perſiſt in it until death—that never a ſingle man ſhould deſert the cauſe and diſcover the fraud. This would ſurpaſs all miracles.

If their deſign had been a fraud, it might, in the time of it, have been eaſily detected and ſuppreſſed.

The facts, which they relate, they declared, were done publicly and recently, and that they were known and remembered by many then living. If there had been no ſuch perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, or if he had performed no ſuch miracles as are aſcribed to him; no credit would have been given to their report.

The diſciples of Jeſus had enemies who wiſhed to confound them. The Jewiſh rulers ſpared no pains to ſuppreſs the Chriſtian cauſe. Their enmity to it would have excited them to convict the witneſſes of falſehood, if they had not known that the facts aſſerted were indiſputable. If they had diſcovered any fraud, they would immediately have made it public. As they never denied the facts, but only ſtudied to evade the concluſion drawn from them, they muſt have been convinced, that the facts themſelves were undeniable.

Theſe witneſſes have left a written teſtimony which has come down to us with every deſirable circumſtance of credibility.

There are four men who have profeſſedly written diſtinct hiſtories of the life, miniſtry and works of Jeſus Chriſt. Two of them, Matthew and John, were his attendant diſciples from the beginning to the end of his public life. The other two, Mark and Luke, were contemporary and converſant with his diſciples. Four others, Peter, James, Jude and Paul, have written epiſtles to particular ſocieties of Chriſtians, or to Chriſtians in general. In theſe epiſtles, they recognize the character, aſſert or al-

lude to the miracles, and teach the doctrines of Jeſus, in ſubſtance, as they are related by the before mentioned hiſtorians. Three of theſe letter writers were Chriſt's diſciples. The laſt was a contemporary Jew, a man of uncommon zeal, learning and ability; much converſant in public affairs; for a while an enemy to Chriſtianity, but afterward converted to the belief of it. So that the Chriſtian hiſtory ſtands on the credit of eight different perſons, moſt of them diſciples, and all of them contemporaries of Chriſt. They wrote ſeparately, on different occaſions, without any appearance of concert; and yet they all ſubſtantially agree. Theſe writings were received as genuine in the time when the authors lived, and in the next ſucceeding age, and from age to age, ever ſince, down to the preſent time. There is no ancient hiſtory extant, which is ſo completely authenticated.

The converſion, miniſtry and epiſtles of the Apoſtle Paul afford ſtrong and undeniable evidence of the truth of the Chriſtian religion. To theſe I ſhall now pay particular attention.

The account, which we have of him, is given by Luke in his hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles. This Luke appears to have been a man of learning; ſuch his writings ſhew him to be. He was an eſteemed and eminent phyſician—ſo Paul calls him. He was admitted to an acquaintance with men of the firſt diſtinction; as appears by the dedication of his works to the moſt excellent Theophilus. He was highly regarded among the Chriſtians of his time, and his praiſe, for the goſpel which he wrote, was in all the churches. He was an intimate companion of St. Paul, and accompanied him for a conſiderable time in his travels.—From him we have particular information concerning Paul's early life, remarkable converſion, and ſubſequent conduct: And every thing related by

Luke we find confirmed in the writings of Paul himſelf.

Paul, who was a Jew by nation, had been educated in the rigid principles of the ſect called Phariſees, and formed to eminent learning in the celebrated ſchool of Gamaliel. He was a man of diſtinction among his countrymen, and famous for his zeal in oppoſing Chriſtianity. His worldly intereſt and preferment, the ſentiments imbibed from his education, and the prevalent opinion of the Jewiſh rulers and prieſts, all concurred to fill him with violent prejudices againſt the goſpel of Chriſt. In human view, no man was more unlikely than he, to be converted to the belief of it; and no time was more unpromiſing for his converſion than that in which it took place. He had juſt conſented to, and aſſiſted in the execution of an eminent preacher of the goſpel. Breathing out threatening and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of the Lord, he had ſought and obtained from the Jewiſh high prieſt a commiſſion to bind and bring to Jeruſalem for public puniſhment all, both men and women, whom he found profeſſing the faith of Jeſus Chriſt. And for the execution of this bloody commiſſion, he was now going to Damaſcus. His zeal againſt the goſpel was, at this time, wound up to the higheſt ſtrain. Who would ſuſpect, that this man ſhould become a Chriſtian?———But ſo it was: When he came near to Damaſcus, he was, at noonday, ſuddenly ſurpriſed with a light from heaven, far exceeding the brightneſs of the ſun. This was followed with an articulate voice, calling him by name, expoſtulating with him for his perſecution of the church of Chriſt, and warning him of the ruin which he would bring on himſelf. Struck with conviction of his guilt, Paul inquired, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' The ſame voice directed him to proceed on his journey into the city, where he ſhould meet with inſtructions adapt-

ed to his caſe. In conſequence of this viſion he fell blind. He was led by ſome of the company which attended him, into the city. There he ſpent his time in prayer. After ſome days a Chriſtian diſciple came to him, related to him the purpoſe of the viſion, and reſtored him to his ſight by laying his hands on him in the name of Chriſt. Soon after this, Paul became a preacher of the goſpel. That this wonderful ſcene was real, and not imaginary, no man can reaſonbly doubt.

There is nothing, in Paul's conduct or writings, that ſavours of fanaticiſm; but, on the contrary, he uniformly appears to have poſſeſſed a good underſtanding and a ſound judgment. If he had been an enthuſiaſt, yet he never would have fancied a revelation in oppoſition to his religious principles, his worldly intereſt, and all his ſtrong prejudices. Enthuſiaſm never takes this turn, but always falls in with ſome previous paſſion, intereſt or humor.

Paul was now actually engaged in a deſign to extirpate Chriſtianity, and he was perſuaded, that his deſign was laudable. If he had been a fanatic, he might have fancied a revelation in favor of his deſign; but it was impoſſible that imagination ſhould create a light and voice in direct oppoſition to a deſign, which he had ſo much at heart, and which he thought ſo pious.

Beſides: This whole ſcene was open and public, and attended with none of thoſe circumſtances of ſecreſy and diſguiſe, which uſually attend the revelations of enthuſiaſts and impoſtors. It took place, not in the night, but in full day—not in a private apartment, or retired deſert, but in the high road, and near a populous city—not when Paul was alone, but when he was in the company of a number of people, who all ſaw the light and heard the voice, as well as he, though they underſtood not the words which were ſpoken. And theſe were

not Chriſtians, but enemies to Chriſtianity, as well as he.

Nothing can be more abſurd, than to ſuppoſe, that a number of men, all violent oppoſers of the goſpel, ſhould happen, all at the ſame moment, to fancy, that they ſaw a light, and heard a voice in confirmation of the goſpel, and that one of them fell blind, and continued ſo for ſeveral days, if no ſuch thing had taken place.

That this ſtory was not a fiction of the writer, but a fact fully believed by him, is as evident, as any ancient *hiſtorical* fact can poſſibly be. It is publicly aſſerted by Luke ſoon after it is ſaid to have happened; and the time, place and circumſtances are pointed out; ſo that it might eaſily have been diſproved, if it had not been true. Paul himſelf, in two of his public defences, and in the preſence of numbers of Jews, relates the ſtory, and appeals to it as a proof of his Apoſtleſhip, which he would not have done, if there had not been full evidence of the truth of it. He alludes to it alſo in ſeveral of his epiſtles, which ſhews, that it was then fully believed in the churches.

This viſion produced in Paul a mighty change. From this time he became a firm, unwavering believer, and a zealous, intrepid preacher of the goſpel. He openly profeſſed his faith, that Jeſus was the Son of God; and he immediately received baptiſm the inſtituted badge of diſcipleſhip. And, being divinely inſtructed, that he was appointed a miniſter and witneſs of Jeſus, he ſtraightway preached him in Damaſcus, proving that he was the very Chriſt foretold by the prophets. From Damaſcus, where he firſt began his miniſtry, and where he ſoon found his life in danger, he privately eſcaped to Jeruſalem. There he joined the other Apoſtles, and ſpake boldly in the name of the Lord Jeſus. Afterward, being ordained by certain prophets and teachers of the church as an Apoſtle of the Gen-

of an hiſtorian writing of another man; Paul alludes to them with the modeſty, or appeals to them with the reluctance of an honeſt man conſtrained to ſpeak of himſelf.

Any diſcerning perſon, reading the writings of the New Teſtament, and comparing them together, will find deciſive evidence of their genuineneſs and authenticity.

But we have ſtill farther evidence in their favor.

Every man, in the leaſt acquainted with hiſtory, knows, that, in the time when the books of the New Teſtament are ſuppoſed to have been written, there were thoſe perſons who are here mentioned; as Auguſtus, Tiberius, Claudius, Herod, Pilate, Felix, Feſtus, Caiaphas, and many others: And that there were thoſe ſects and claſſes of men, which are here deſcribed; as Phariſees, Sadducees, Scribes and Herodians: And that there were thoſe cuſtoms and uſages, which are here related; as the feaſts of the paſſover and pentecoſt, the ceremony and circumciſion, a great ſtrictneſs in obſerving the ſabbath, and in reading the law. It is well known that the Jews were under the Roman government, paid tribute to the emperor, received their chief magiſtrates by his appointment, could put no man to death without his permiſſion; and many other things too numerous to be here mentioned.

Now if the writings of the New Teſtament exhibit a true account of the ſtate of things in that age, we muſt believe, they were extant in, or near that age. And if the authors have ſtrictly regarded the truth in every thing elſe, why ſhould their veracity be queſtioned in things, which concern the Lord Jeſus. If we believe, there were ſuch men as Ceſar, Herod and Pilate, who performed the works aſcribed to them; Why may we not believe, there was ſuch a perſon as *Jeſus Chriſt*, who performed the works aſcribed to *him*?

That there was an extraordinary person called by this name, who did many wonderful things, and was put to death under Tiberius; and that there was such a sect as Christians, denominated from him, which made a great noise, and became very numerous in the world, soon after the death of their founder, we have evidence from Heathen, as well as Christian writers.

The books of the New Testament were early received as the genuine works of the men, whose names they bear; and in this character they have been handed down to the present time. Of this we have as good evidence, as we have of any ancient facts. Writers who flourished soon after the Apostles, and who were conversant with them, or with their immediate disciples, can even now, at this distance of time, be produced as witnesses of the genuineness of almost all the books of the New Testament; as the four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of Paul, the first of Peter, and the first of John. And writers but little later bear witness to the authority of them all.

A certain writer named *Papias*, who lived soon after the Apostles, and was conversant with their immediate disciples, is quoted by *Eusebius*, a church historian, in confirmation of the gospel of *Matthew*. *Justin*, *Irenæus* and *Clement* of Alexandria, who wrote about the middle of the second century, quote several passages out of *Mark's* gospel, and prove that he wrote it, and that it was seen and commended by the Apostle *Peter*. *Paul* himself has given his sanction to *Luke's* gospel by quoting a passage from it in his first epistle to Timothy. The ancients generally apply to *Luke* these words of Paul to the Corinthians, 'We have sent the brother, whose praise is in the gospel through all the churches.' *Origen* declares, that *Luke's* gospel was approved by *Paul*. It is quoted by *Justin* and others in the second century, near the times of the

Apoſtles. *Irenæus*, who was acquainted with *Polycarp*, a diſciple of the Apoſtle *John*, has with great accuracy proved the genuineneſs of the goſpel received under the name of that Apoſtle. Several other early fathers aſcribe it to him, and ſay, that the authority of it was never controverted in the church. *Euſebius* informs us that *John* read and approved the goſpels of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, and added his own as a ſupplement to them. The book called *the Acts of the Apoſtles*, compared with *Luke's* goſpel, appears to have been written by the ſame author. All the ancients agree that it was compoſed by *Luke*, and received in the church as an authentic hiſtory. As ſuch it is quoted by *Clement* of Rome, who was a companion with Paul; by *Papias*, who converſed with men of the Apoſtles' times; by *Polycarp*, who was John's diſciple; and by *Irenæus*, who lived in the ſecond century.

Thirteen of *Paul's* epiſtles, with the firſt of *Peter*, and the firſt of *John*, were never queſtioned; for there were particular churches or perſons, to whom all the originals, except the two laſt mentioned epiſtles, were directed. Theſe originals were carefully preſerved in the churches which received them, as *Tertullian* ſays, down to his time, which was the third century. They were acknowledged, without heſitancy, by the whole Chriſtian church, as *Clement* and *Origen* affirm. They were cited as Paul's epiſtles, in the very age in which they were written, and in the next ſucceeding age, and ſo on in every age ſince.

The epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that of *James*, and that of *Jude*, the ſecond of *Peter*, the ſecond and third of *John*, and the *Revelation*, were not at firſt univerſally received: But we find, by the teſtimony of a number of the before mentioned fathers, that, after ſome inquiry, they were admitted as genuine and authentic in the earlieſt times. As

theſe books were written either to Chriſtians diſperſed abroad, or to private perſons, it was not ſo eaſy at once to aſcertain their authority, as it was that of the other books, which were directed to particular churches; for there the author's hand-writing, and the character of the meſſengers who brought them were well known, and there they were immediately and repeatedly read.

The caution with which the churches received ſome of the books of the preſent canon, ſhews that, in this important matter, they did not act with a haſty credulity, but with a juſt concern to avoid impoſition. So that the canon of the New Teſtament ſtands on better footing, than if no doubts had ariſen about any part of it.

Not only were theſe books univerſally received by Chriſtians of the early ages, but publicly read in the churches. Paul orders his firſt epiſtle to the Theſſalonians to be read to all the holy brethren; and his epiſtle to the Coloſſians to be communicated to the church of the Laodiceans. And Peter, in his ſecond epiſtle, ſignifies, that Paul had written a number of epiſtles, which were generally known in the churches. Juſtin Martyr, in a book which he wrote about forty years after the Apoſtolic age, ſpeaks of the writings of the Apoſtles, as read every Sabbath in the Chriſtian congregations.

From theſe teſtimonies it appears, that the books of the New Teſtament were, in that age in which they were written, and in the next ſucceeding age, received as the genuine works of the men whoſe names they bear. And from age to age the teſtimonies of their reception became more and more numerous. Yea, we find, within about fifty years after the Apoſtles, the teſtimonies of heathens and infidels, that there were ſuch books extant as thoſe which we now receive, and that theſe books were acknowledged and revered by Chriſtians.

Theſe writings were early, probably within forty or fifty years after Chriſt's aſcention, collected into a volume, and treated by Chriſtians with peculiar marks of faith and reverence.

Now if theſe books had not been genuine, it is impoſſible that they ſhould have gained ſuch univerſal credit among Chriſtians. If there had been no ſuch men known as their reputed authors, they never could have obtained any credit at all. The authors appear under appropriate names and characters, call themſelves apoſtles and diſciples of Jeſus; relate many remarkable facts as then recent and notorious; mention many miraculous works performed, and ſupernatural gifts exerciſed by them, in ſuch places, and in the preſence of ſuch perſons and churches; appeal to the public for the truth of many of the facts related; repreſent themſelves and other apoſtles as having been preſent in theſe and thoſe places, and there preached, wrought miracles, made converts, formed churches, and imparted ſupernatural gifts. Now it is impoſſible that any perſons, eſpecially ſocieties, ſhould have received theſe books, if they had never ſeen ſuch men, known ſuch facts, or heard of ſuch churches. Every one who ſaw the writings would naturally inquire, Where are the churches which are here addreſſed? Who are the men that ſpeak of themſelves as ſo generally known? Who has ever been acquainted with the matters which they relate with ſo much aſſurance? Aſk yourſelves: Would the hiſtory of the late American war, and the revolution which followed, be received with any regard among the people of America in the preſent age, if no ſuch events had taken place? Or would ſuch a fictitious hiſtory go down with credit to ſucceeding ages? The reception of a hiſtory relating to facts of recent exiſtence and public notoriety, is an evidence of its truth.

ich a time, and in ſuch a place; to have been to ſuch churches, by ſuch meſſengers; and to e been ſigned by his own hand. Now if theſe rches had never received ſuch letters, or ſeen r meſſengers, or if Chriſtians in general had r heard of ſuch writings, until ſome years after pretend to have been ſent abroad and publicly l—this would have been a ſufficient reaſon r to have admitted them.

loſt of Paul's epiſtles were written to noted rches in populous cities; and, conſequently, if were genuine, they muſt have been known re his death. If they had not appeared until r his death, the churches to which they pre- l to have been ſent, would have declared, they r received them, and thus have expoſed the de- ion.

n ſhort, if we ſuppoſe the books of the New ament to be ſpurious, we muſt ſuppoſe, that Chriſtians, in the Apoſtolic and ſucceeding a- among whom were many learned, and doubt- many honeſt men, did all, in the ſeveral dif- nt countries of Chriſtendom, without any con- able motive, confederate in a fraud, and agree mpoſe on the world. A ſuppoſition this,

bled zeal for the glory of God and the ſalvation of mankind; that courage—that diſregard to his own intereſt, when it interfered with higher views—that boldneſs of expreſſion—that life and ſpirit which are hard to be counterfeited. The ſame force and energy, which animated all his actions, and empowered him to ſpread the goſpel from eaſt to weſt, ennobles all his compoſitions; and it would be almoſt as impoſſible for an impoſtor to write as Paul did, as it would be to act as he did. It is very difficult to perſonate ſuch a warm, affectionate and intereſting writer. There is an exact reſemblance in his ſpeeches and in his epiſtles. In both there is the ſame greatneſs of ſpirit, the ſame glowing language, the ſame elevated thoughts, warm from the heart. In both, he ſpeaks and writes with too animated a zeal, to be a cold deceiver; with too much ſenſe, ſolidity and conſiſtence, to be an enthuſiaſt."

Of our preceding reaſonings this is the reſult;

THE RELIGION OF THE GOSPEL IS DIVINE.

This religion, if it be divine, muſt be ſupremely important. Do you believe, that God has ſent into the world a Savior from heaven—has borne witneſs to him by miracles and wonders—has ſubjected him to death for our redemption, and raiſed him from the dead by his mighty power—has given ſupport to the religion which this Savior taught, and by a wonderful providence—has conveyed it down to our day with full evidence of its heavenly original? Do you believe all this?—Surely you muſt believe, that this is a religion in which mankind are infinitely concerned.—Come forward then; make an open profeſſion of it, and tell the world, you are not aſhamed of it.

Faithfully attend on the inſtituted worſhip of God. This is a great ſecurity againſt irreligion and infidelity. That Chriſtians may hold faſt the

profession of their faith, the Apostle enjoins them to keep up their religious assemblies.

Be solicitous to obtain a share in the great blessings, which this religion offers to you.—Seek pardon and glory, in the way which it prescribes, by repentance of sin and faith in the redeemer. There is no other name by which you can be saved.

Endeavor to extend the knowledge, advance the honor and promote the success of the gospel; put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; confirm them who waver; strengthen such as are weak; encourage the young and tender, and guard them against the instructions which cause to err. If you ask, How this shall be done?—take the Apostle's advice, "Only let your conversation be, as it becometh the gospel of Christ."



SERMON II.

EPHESIANS i. 1, 2, 3.

Paul, an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, by the will of God to the ſaints which are in Epheſus, and to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus. Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in Chriſt.

EPHESUS, the city in which the church here addreſſed was collected, was the metropolis of *Leſſer Aſia;* and lying on the ſea coaſt, it was a place of conſiderable trade. The Greeks inhabiting this city were zealous idolaters. They are ſaid, in the 19th Chapter of the Acts, to be "worſhippers of the great goddeſs Diana, and of the image that fell down from Jupiter." In this city ſtood the temple of Diana, which, for its grandeur and magnificence, was conſidered as one of the wonders of the world. The *Epheſians* were alſo celebrated for their ſkill in the arts of magic and divination, as we find in the Chapter before cited. And from this epiſtle of Paul, we learn that they were alſo infamous for luxury, laſciviouſneſs and all uncleanneſs. In this city dwelt great numbers of Jews, who had a ſynagogue here for divine worſhip, in

which Paul preached for ſeveral months. This is the firſt account, which we have, of the publication of the goſpel in this city. After his departure, Apollos, who was an eloquent man and mighty in the ſcriptures, came to *Epheſus*. He had been educated in the Jewiſh religion; but having lately been inſtructed in the way of the Lord, he came and taught it diligently in the ſynagogue. Paul, not long after this, returning to Epheſus, preached there above two years together; "So that not only the *Epheſians*, but all who dwelt in *Aſia* heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks; and God wrought ſpecial miracles by the hands of Paul. And the name of the Lord Jeſus was magnified; and many believed, and came and confeſſed their evil deeds; and the word of the Lord mightily grew and prevailed."

Sometime after Paul's departure from *Epheſus*, we find that he was ſent a priſoner to *Rome*. In his confinement he wrote ſeveral epiſtles to churches and chriſtian friends; and, among others, this to the church of *Epheſus*; for he calls himſelf, Chap. iv. *the priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt for the Gentiles.*

He directs this letter *to the ſaints which are at Epheſus, and to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus*, i. e. not only to thoſe in *Epheſus* who had believed, but to thoſe in other parts of *Aſia*, who had heard the word of the goſpel from him, while he was preaching in that city. So he orders his epiſtle to the *Coloſſians* to be read alſo in the church of the *Laodiceans.*

The deſign of this epiſtle is more fully to inſtruct them in the nature of that goſpel which they had received; to guard them againſt certain errors, to which they were expoſed from the influence and example of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles; and to inculcate upon them the importance of a converſation becoming their faith and profeſſion. It contains the ſubſtance of the goſpel; And one who

reads and underſtands it, will have a good acquaintance with that religion which Paul taught in all his epiſtles and diſcourſes.

I intend, if providence ſhall give me opportunity, to illuſtrate and improve this whole epiſtle; in doing which I ſhall lay before you a ſyſtem of chriſtian doctrines and precepts in the order and connexion in which the Apoſtle has arranged them.

At preſent I ſhall confine myſelf to the words which have been read.

Paul here calls himſelf *an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt.* The word *Apoſtle* ſignifies a meſſenger *ſent* on ſome particular buſineſs. Jeſus Chriſt is called an *Apoſtle*, becauſe he was *ſent* of God to inſtruct and redeem mankind. Paul and others are called *Apoſtles*, becauſe they were *ſent* of Chriſt to teach the doctrines which they had received from him. To the eleven diſciples, after his reſurrection, he ſays, "As the Father hath ſent me, ſo ſend I you. All power is given me in heaven and in earth. Go teach, or *proſelyte*, all nations, teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you." Their commiſſion did not confine them within any preſcribed limits, as did the commiſſion of thoſe whom the Apoſtles ordained over particular churches; but it authorized them to go forth and ſpread the goſpel in all parts of the world; and to confirm this extenſive commiſſion as well as to give their miniſtry ſucceſs. Chriſt, according to this promiſe, wrought with them, and eſtabliſhed their word with ſigns following:

Paul ſays, He was an Apoſtle *by the will of God.* In his epiſtle to the Galatians he ſtyles himſelf, *an Apoſtle, not of man neither by man, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father.* He received not his call or commiſſion from man, nor was he, as *Matthias* was, choſen to his Apoſtleſhip by men; but he was called by *Jeſus Chriſt*, who in perſon appeared to him for this end, that he might ſend him among the

Gentiles; and by *God the Father*, who revealed his Son in him, and choſe him that he ſhould know his will, and be a witneſs of the truth unto all men.

But though he was called of God by revelation, yet it was not a *ſecret* revelation known only to himſelf, like the revelations on which enthuſiaſts and impoſtors ground their pretenſions; but it was a revelation made in the moſt open and public manner, attended with a voice from heaven, and a light which outſhone the ſun at noonday, and exhibited in the midſt of a number of people, to whom he could appeal as witneſſes of the extraordinary ſcene.

Notwithſtanding this heavenly viſion, Paul entered not on the execution of his apoſtolic office, nor once preſumed to preach the goſpel, till Ananias came to him, and, laying his hands on him, declared, that God had choſen him to bear Chriſt's name among the Gentiles. The truth of this declaration Ananias confirmed by a ſudden and miraculous reſtoration of Paul to his ſight. Nor was he received by the Apoſtles at Jeruſalem, until he was recommended to them by the teſtimony of Barnabas, who had been intimately acquainted with theſe previous tranſactions. Nor did he, after all, go forth to execute his commiſſion among the *Gentiles*, until the elders of the church at Antioch had ſolemnly ſeparated him to this work by faſting and prayer, and the impoſition of their hands.

The great buſineſs of Paul and the other Apoſtles was to diffuſe the knowledge of the goſpel, and plant churches in various parts of the world. And when a competent number of believers were collected in a particular place, ſome mete perſon was uſually ordained to reſide among them as a ſtated teacher. Accordingly we find Timothy ordained over this church of Epheſus, by the laying on of the hands of the preſbytery, of which Paul himſelf



was one. And the authority which Timothy had thus received, the ſame he was ordered to commit to faithful men, who ſhould be able to teach others; and he was cautioned to lay hands ſuddenly on no man.

Paul was an Apoſtle according to the will of God, as he was called to, and furniſhed for the work of an Apoſtle by revelation from God, and as he was introduced into the Apoſtolic office in an open and ſolemn manner, according to the inſtitution of God.

Paul directs this epiſtle to the *ſaints and faithful.* By the ſame, or ſimilar appellations, he in moſt of his epiſtles addreſſes the churches of Chriſtians.

We cannot ſuppoſe, that he intends by theſe terms to declare *all* the members of this, or any other particular church to be godly perſons; for this in fact was not the ſtate of any church. In all the churches founded by the Apoſtles there were many, who after ſome time diſcovered the corruption and wickedneſs of their hearts. The phraſes rather denote, that they had been called out of the world, and ſeparated from others, that they might be a peculiar people unto God. The words, *ſaints, faithful, brethren, diſciples, chriſtians,* are often uſed in a general ſenſe, to expreſs men's viſible, profeſſed character, rather than any certain judgment concerning the habitual temper of their hearts. The ſabbath, the temple, its utenſils, and the ground on which it ſtood, are called *holy,* becauſe they were ſeparated from a common to a ſacred uſe. The nation of the Jews, corrupt as they were, are called a *holy nation,* becauſe they were ſeparated from other nations for the ſervice of the true God. So the Chriſtian church is called *a holy nation, a peculiar people, to ſhew forth the praiſes of him, who had called them out of darkneſs into his marvellous light.* In many places the word *ſaints* ſtands oppoſed, not to unſound Chriſtians, but to heathens.

However, though the Apoſtle does not, by theſe terms, declare, that the Epheſian profeſſors were all pure in their hearts, yet he taught them, and he teaches us, that all *ought* to be ſo. We are *called* to be holy;—we are brought to the enjoyment of goſpel hopes and privileges, that we might ſerve God in newneſs of ſpirit—that we might not be conformed to this world, but, being transformed by the renewing of our mind, might prove what is the acceptable will of God.

The religion, which we profeſs contains the higheſt motives to purity of heart and life. If content with a verbal profeſſion of, and external compliance with this religion, we regard iniquity in our hearts—we are guilty of the vileſt prevarication; and our religion, inſtead of ſaving us, will but plunge us the deeper into infamy and miſery.—That which is the viſible, ought to be the real character of Chriſtians; *ſaints and faithful in Chriſt Jeſus.*

The Apoſtle, in the next place, expreſſes his fervent deſire, that theſe Epheſians might receive *grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Under theſe general terms are comprehended all the glorious bleſſings which are revealed and offered in the goſpel.

Grace ſignifies, *free, undeſerved favor.* Such are all the bleſſings which we receive through Chriſt. If we deſerved, or could claim them from the juſtice of God, on the foot of our own works, there would have been no need of the interpoſition of a Savior. He came only to ſave them who are loſt.

The *pardon of ſin* is grace; for it is the remiſſion of a deſerved puniſhment.—"The wages of ſin is death."

Eternal life is grace, for it is a happineſs of which we are utterly unworthy. "They who re-

ceive abundance of grace reign in life by Jeſus Chriſt."

The *influences of the divine ſpirit* are grace; for they are firſt granted without any good diſpoſitions on our part to invite them; they are continued even after repeated oppoſitions; they prepare us for that world of glory, for which we never ſhould qualify ourſelves.

Theſe bleſſings come to us *through Chriſt*. They are the fruits of his atonement and mediation.—But ſtill they are the fruits of God's grace, as much as if he had beſtowed them abſolutely, and without this wonderful purchaſe; for the gift of the Savior is the conſequence of the grace of God, "Who ſo loved the world, that he ſent his only begotten Son, that we might live through him."

The Apoſtle wiſhes to the Epheſians *peace*, as well as grace. By *this* we are to underſtand that *peace of mind*, which ariſes from a perſuaſion of our intereſt in the favor of God. Our peace with *God* is immediately connected with our faith in Chriſt. "Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God." Our peace of *mind* is connected with our knowledge of the ſincerity of our faith. "If our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God."—The ſincerity of our faith is proved by the fruits of it in our lives. The way to enjoy peace, is to increaſe in all holy diſpoſitions, and to abound in every good work.

If the Apoſtle wiſhed grace and peace to Chriſtians, ſurely *they* ſhould feel ſome ſolicitude to enjoy them. You think your miniſter ſhould be concerned for the happineſs of his people; but ought not every one rather to be concerned for his own? You cenſure the coldneſs which you obſerve in the teachers of religion; you wiſh they were more zealous and animated: And will you at the ſame time neglect the means of religion, which you enjoy? You would have others take more pains for your

ſalvation: And will you take no pains for your own? Let every man give diligence for himſelf, that he may obtain grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

The Apoſtle, in the words which follow, expreſſes a ſtrong and lively ſenſe of gratitude for the rich and ineſtimable bleſſings granted through Chriſt to an unworthy race. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places*, or in heavenly things, *in Chriſt*.

The common bleſſings of providence, as food and raiment, health and liberty, are valuable for the preſent, and call for daily returns of praiſe.—But theſe are only temporal and earthly goods. The bleſſings revealed in the goſpel, and diſpenſed to us through Chriſt, are of a different nature and of higher importance. They are called *ſpiritual* and *heavenly* things. They are accommodated to our ſpiritual wants and deſires—they come down from heaven, prepare us for heaven, and will be completed in our admiſſion to heaven. The influences of the ſpirit are heavenly gifts—the renovation of the heart by a divine operation is wiſdom from above—the renewed Chriſtian is born from above and become a ſpiritual man—the ſtate of immortality which Chriſt has purchaſed for believers, is an inheritance reſerved for them in heaven—in the reſurrection they will be clothed with a houſe from heaven, with ſpiritual and heavenly bodies, and they will be made to ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus.

The Apoſtle ſays, "God has bleſſed us with ALL ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly things"—with all things neceſſary to bring us to the enjoyment of himſelf in heaven. "The divine power," ſays St. Peter, "hath given us *all things* which pertain to life and godlineſs, through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue—and hath

given us exceeding great and precious promiſes, that by them we might be partakers of a divine nature."

The particular bleſſings vouchſafed to, and deſigned for believers, are enumerated in the following verſes; ſuch as election and vocation to be the people of God—predeſtination to the adoption of children—acceptance in Chriſt Jeſus and redemption through his blood—the revelation of the myſtery of God's will—a title to the heavenly inheritance—and the ſanctification and ſealing of the holy ſpirit. To diſplay the nature and importance of theſe bleſſings we ſhall have occaſion hereafter in the proſecution of our deſign.

I would now obſerve, that the bleſſings granted to the Epheſian believers, are alſo tendered to us. God in his ſovereign goodneſs, has choſen us from among the nations of the world to be his peculiar people, and to enjoy his oracles and ordinances.—He offers to us the honors and felicities of adoption, and the remiſſion of all our ſins through the atonement of his Son. He has propoſed for our acceptance an inheritance incorruptible in the heavens. He grants the motions of his bleſſed ſpirit to awaken our minds to theſe important concerns.—And to true believers, he affords the ſanctifying, ſealing and comforting influence of his grace. He has made known to us the myſtery of his will, which is ſtill hidden from the greater part of our race. He has favored us with a complete revelation, and placed us in a condition which allows our frequent attendance on the diſpenſation of his word and ordinances.

We are in ſome reſpects privileged far beyond the Chriſtians to whom this epiſtle was written.—They for a ſeaſon enjoyed the preaching of an inſpired Apoſtle. In his abſence he wrote to them this letter, which doubtleſs contains the ſubſtance of the things which he taught, while he was among

them. But of this letter they could have the benefit only by hearing it read in one place and another. While he preached in Aſia, he confined his miniſtry chiefly to this capital city. They who lived in the remoter parts could not, without much labor, enjoy the benefit of his preaching. But we have in our hands not only this epiſtle, but the other writings of Paul and his fellow Apoſtles, and we may daily converſe with them. Places of divine worſhip are near us, and, without the expenſe of diſtant journeys, we may attend on the preaching of the word and other ſacred exerciſes of religion. We have therefore happier advantages to become acquainted with the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel, than the primitive Chriſtians could enjoy. If they were bound to give thanks for their privileges; how criminal muſt be ingratitude under ours!

It is ſaid, While Paul preached in Epheſus, *all they who dwelt in Aſia, heard the word of the Lord.* What pains muſt they have taken! for divers of them came from far. Conſider Paul as preaching in the Jewiſh ſynagogue at Epheſus, as long as he could have admittance; and, when he was driven from thence, removing to a public ſchool, and there reaſoning daily in defence of the goſpel. See all the country around coming together, from time to time, to hear this inſpired teacher. Obſerve what pains they took to become acquainted with a religion, which condemned their former ſentiments and practices. Remark, how they yielded to the conviction of truth, renounced their idolatry, confeſſed their evil deeds, condemned their pretended intercourſe with inviſible ſpirits, and ſubmitted to the pure and rational religion of the goſpel; and then ſay, whether we have not cauſe to be deeply humbled, that this ſame goſpel, which we enjoy under ſuperior advantages, has ſo little influence on our own hearts and the hearts of others? Is

there not occaſion to lament, that the word of God, which then ſo mightily grew and prevailed, is now treated with ſo much indifference?

Ye who neglect to attend on the word now brought near to you, What will you ſay in excuſe for yourſelves, when you ſee how all who dwelt in Aſia came to Epheſus to hear this ſame word?—Ye who can reliſh nothing, but what accords with your own fancies and humors, and who are at once diſguſted with the preaching which contradicts your former ſentiments and practices, How will you juſtify this perverſe temper, when you ſee what humility and candor appeared in thoſe Aſiatic heathens?—They could hear Paul diſputing daily againſt their preconceived opinions; could liſten with patience to his arguments, which all tended to confound them; and on conviction could give up their errors and confeſs their evil deeds.—Ye who treat the worſhip and ordinances of God with contempt; what will you plead in your vindication, when you obſerve, with how much gratitude and reverence the ſame were received at Epheſus?—Ye who attend on God's word in vain—who feel no influence from it—who though you hear it, yet live in habitual oppoſition to it, What will you urge in your defence, when you recollect, how mightily it grew in Epheſus, and how it transformed idolaters, ſorcerers, and the groſſeſt tranſgreſſors into ſaints, believers and the worſhippers of the true God?

Remember, that you muſt one day anſwer before God for all the ſpiritual bleſſings which he has ſent you. It is not a matter of indifference, whether you receive or reject them. If you put them from you, you will ſuffer the loſs of them, and be puniſhed with awful ſeverity for your contempt.—When God ſhall bring every work into judgment, he will take into conſideration all the privileges which you have enjoyed, as well as all the works

which you have done, and according to both will he judge you. They who have never heard of the goſpel, will meet a more tolerable doom, than ſuch as have known and deſpiſed it. Theſe will periſh wonderfully. Their puniſhment will be ſuch as they would not believe and could not imagine, though one ſhould declare it to them. The men of Sodom, in their days were ſinners of diſtinguiſhed guilt, and their deſtruction, in the conflagration of their city, is ſet forth as an example of God's righteous ſeverity. But juſtice has not done with them. In the day of judgment they will receive a ſtill ſorer condemnation; and after all, it will be more tolerable for them, than for thoſe who deſpiſe the goſpel.

To us the word of ſalvation is ſent. Let us hear it with care and receive it with joy, accept the bleſſings which it offers and walk worthy of him who has called us to his kingdom and glory.



SERMON III.

EPHESIANS i. 4, 5, 6.

According as he hath choſen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love, having predeſtinated us to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt unto himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will, to the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved:——

IN the verſe preceding the words now read, the Apoſtle thankfully acknowledges the great mercy of God, *who has bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly things in Chriſt Jeſus.*— Theſe bleſſings he proceeds to enumerate; and the firſt which he mentions is, God's chooſing us to be an holy people to himſelf, and adopting us to the privileges of children.

The Jews, for many ages, had been the peculiar people of God, ſeparated from other nations, and diſtinguiſhed by ſpecial advantages. God had now ſeen fit to take the *Gentiles* into covenant with himſelf, and to aboliſh the diſtinction between them and his ancient people.

The Jews believed that God from the beginning had choſen *them* to ſalvation, and had appointed the Meſſiah in due time to appear in the world,

that none of *them* might periſh. But the Apoſtle, to remove from the Jews all cauſe of boaſting, and from the Gentiles all ground of diſcouragement, here declares, that God from the beginning had choſen the *Gentiles* in Chriſt, and predeſtinated them to a place in his church, that, in the enjoyment of the goſpel, they might become holy and be made mete for heaven.

In our text we may obſerve the following particulars.

That God had *choſen* and *predeſtinated* theſe Epheſians.

That they were choſen to be *holy* and *without blame before him, in love.*

That they were predeſtinated to *the adoption of children to himſelf.*

That they were choſen *in Chriſt Jeſus.*

That the reaſon of God's chooſing them was *the good pleaſure of his own will.*

That the purpoſe for which they were choſen was *the praiſe of the glory of his grace.*

I. We may, firſt, obſerve, that God *choſe* and *predeſtinated* theſe Epheſian Chriſtians *before the foundation of the world.*

Thoſe ſpiritual privileges and bleſſings, which they enjoyed or expected, were the reſult of that glorious plan, which the infinite wiſdom and abundant grace of God had formed: *For*, as it is ſaid, verſe 11. *they were predeſtinated according to the purpoſe of him, who worketh all things after the counſel of his own will.*

When we ſpeak of God's *foreknowledge* or *predeſtination* of events, we muſt always keep in mind this idea, "that his thoughts are not as our thoughts, but as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are his thoughts higher than ours."

This Apoſtle ſpeaks of Chriſtians, as *predeſtinated according to God's purpoſe.* Peter ſays, *They are elected according to the foreknowledge of God.* But

this mode of ſpeaking rather expreſſes things according to the imperfect manner in which we apprehend them, than according to the perfect manner in which they exiſt in the divine mind: God's underſtanding is infinite. He views things immediately and intuitively as they are. Darkneſs and light, paſt and future, are alike to him. "He ſeeth not as man ſeeth, nor are his years as man's days. But he inhabiteth eternity; and one day is with him as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day." Therefore all the phraſes, which we meet with in ſcripture, concerning God's *remembrance* of things paſt, *foreknowledge* of things to come, and *deliberation* on things preſent, are to be underſtood, not as literally expreſſive of the real operations of his mind, but as figuratively adapted to the weak conceptions of ours. "His knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain to it."

We know things paſt by memory, and our memory we aſſiſt by records; ſo God is often ſaid to *remember* things, and to keep a *book* of remembrance. But we are ſenſible that theſe expreſſions only denote God's perfect knowledge of thoſe things, which *to us* are paſt—not a laborious recollection of them, or an artificial method of aſſiſting his memory. So, on the other hand, God is ſaid to foreknow things which are future, to foreordain things which ſhall be done, to write, in the volume of his book, things which his counſel has determined; which phraſes do not ſignify that things are really future and diſtant to his view—that his mind is reaching forward—that he writes down a plan of operations for his own direction; but they repreſent the perfect, conſummate, unerring wiſdom with which he governs the univerſe.

Viewing the matter in this light, we ſhall be ſenſible that our perplexity concerning God's foreknowledge and decree, ariſes from the imperfection

of our minds, and the narrowneſs of our comprehenſion; and that there is no more inconſiſtency between the freedom of moral agents and God's foreknowledge, than there is between *this* and his preſent knowledge; for with reſpect to him, foreknowledge and preſent knowledge are the ſame; the difference is only with reſpect to us, with whom things exiſt by ſucceſſion.

The word *election*, or *chooſing*, is, in ſcripture, uſed in various ſenſes.

Sometimes it ſignifies the appointment of a perſon to ſome eminent office or ſervice. Chriſt ſays to his diſciples, "I have *choſen* you twelve;" i. e. I have choſen you to be my diſciples, and preachers of my goſpel. He does not mean that he had choſen them all to *ſalvation*, for one of them was a *ſon of perdition*. In this ſenſe Paul was a *choſen veſſel* to bear Chriſt's name among the Gentiles. And Cyrus, Saul, and David are called God's *choſen*, becauſe they were deſignated to be kings, for the execution of ſome great purpoſes of providence.

The word ſometimes intends *approbation*; as when Chriſt ſays, "Many are called, but few are *choſen*;" i. e. few are *accepted* and *approved*.

Often the word is uſed in a large ſenſe, to comprehend the whole body of God's profeſſing people, whom he has choſen out of the world to be a peculiar people to himſelf. The whole nation of the Jews are ſtyled God's *elect*, and his *choſen*. The Chriſtian church, the whole number of profeſſed believers, are called a *choſen generation*, a *peculiar people*.

But this general ſenſe of the word implies a more particular ſenſe. If God has choſen ſome *nations* rather than others, to enjoy the means of ſalvation, then he gives ſome an advantage above others to obtain ſalvation; and this is as much an act of ſovereignty as the election of particular perſons.



And, without queſtion, ſome, in the nation, choſen to theſe privileges, will thereby eventually be made partakers of the ſalvation revealed. And there are ſome expreſſions, in ſcripture, which ſeem to import an appointment of perſons to *obtain* this ſalvation, as well as to enjoy the *means* of it. Paul ſays to the Theſſalonians, "God hath choſen you to ſalvation through ſanctification of the ſpirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he hath alſo called you by our goſpel." The Apoſtle Peter calls Chriſtians, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through ſanctification of the ſpirit." Election, in theſe paſſages, cannot be underſtood merely of an appointment to external privileges, for the ſubjects of it are ſaid to be choſen *through ſanctification* and *faith*. Now they were not brought to the enjoyment of the goſpel by their faith and holineſs, but they were brought to *theſe* by the goſpel. They were called to ſpiritual privileges while they were in impenitence and unbelief. The goſpel was not the *fruit*, but the *mean* of their faith.

That there is an *election* to *ſalvation*, Chriſtians are generally agreed: In their manner of explaining it, is the chief difference. Some ſuppoſe it to be abſolute and without regard to perſonal qualifications; others ſuppoſe it to be conditional, and grounded on a foreſight of faith in the perſons choſen.

In all queſtions of this kind there are two great points, which we muſt keep in view—our dependence on the grace of God; and our moral agency. On the one hand, we muſt not ſo conceive of God's election, and the influence of his grace, as to ſet aſide our free agency and final accountableneſs; nor, on the other hand, muſt we ſo explain away God's ſovereignty and grace, as to exalt man to a ſtate of independence. While we ſhun theſe extremes, we ſhall not dangerouſly err in the doctrine before us.

It is manifeſt from reaſon, as well as ſcripture, that God exerciſes a moral government in the world, and that his providence extends to particular perſons, to all circumſtances of their condition, and to all the actions of their lives; for we cannot conceive it poſſible, that he ſhould govern the world in general, and yet overlook particular perſons; or that he ſhould order their circumſtances, and yet have no ſuperintendancy or control of their actions.

It is alſo certain, that the grace of God operates in the converſion of ſinners, in ſuch a manner and degree, that they are ſaved by him, not of themſelves.

Now ſo far as the grace of God, in the ſalvation of ſinners, is abſolute and unconditional, election or predeſtination is ſo, and no farther. They run parallel to each other. We are to conceive of election, in the ſame manner as we conceive of the influence of grace; for election can be nothing more, than God's foreknowing and predetermining (to ſpeak according to our way of conception) that he will exerciſe his grace in ſuch a manner as ſhall prove effectual. And his counſels and decrees are only the plan of his providential government. If the latter is not inconſiſtent with human liberty, the former cannot be ſo. If the thing done does not control our agency, the previous purpoſe cannot control it.

The queſtion, whether election is conditional, will eaſily be ſolved by conſidering the end which it reſpects.

If we conſider it as reſpecting the *original plan* of ſalvation, it muſt be abſolute and unconditional. It could not be owing to any foreſeen worthineſs in fallen creatures, that God choſe and determined to ſend them a Savior, and to propoſe ſuch a particular method of ſalvation; but merely to his ſelfmoving, ſovereign grace. Their guilt and im-

potence were the reaſons why ſuch a method of ſalvation was neceſſary, and therefore their foreſeen holineſs and worthineſs could not be the reaſons why ſuch a method was adopted.

If we conſider election as reſpecting the *means* of ſalvation, it is unconditional. It was not owing to the virtue and goodneſs of the human race that a revelation was given them. It was not owing to the previous deſires, prayers and endeavors of the Epheſians or other Gentile nations, that they were brought into a church ſtate, and to the knowledge of the way of ſalvation. It is not owing to any thing which we had done, that the goſpel is ſent to us, and that we were born and have been educated under it. All this muſt be aſcribed to the pure favor of God. He choſe the Epheſians, not becauſe they were holy, but that they might be holy. He predeſtinated them, and made known to them the myſtery of his will, according to the good pleaſure which he purpoſed in himſelf. In this ſenſe the Apoſtle applies the words of the prophet, "I am found of them who ſought me not; I am made manifeſt to them who inquired not after me."

Farther: If we conſider election as it reſpects the *firſt awakening influence* of the Spirit of God on the hearts of obſtinate ſinners, whereby they are excited to ſeek the mercy of God with earneſtneſs, and to attend on the means of ſalvation with diligence, it is here alſo ſovereign and unconditional. For that ſinners, dead in their treſpaſſes, ſhould be awakened to conſideration, inquiry, and an attendance on the means of life, muſt be owing, not to their own previous good diſpoſitions, but to ſome ſpecial Providence, ſeaſonable ward, or internal influence, which was not of their ſeeking. Accordingly our Savior ſays, "Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and ſup with him, and he with me." His knocking is from his own

motion, not from the invitation of ſinners: *That* is the occaſion of their opening; not *this* the occaſion of his knocking.

Again: If election be conſidered as it reſpects the grace of God in the *converſion* of ſinners, I think, it may be called ſovereign and unconditional. To prevent miſtakes, I would qualify this obſervation.

The goſpel comes to men accompanied with the Spirit, which is given to convince them of ſin, awaken in them an apprehenſion of danger and excite their attention to the means of ſafety. Such exerciſes ordinarily precede converſion. And as ſinners more readily yield to theſe motions of the Spirit, and more diligently apply the means of religion, they have more reaſon to expect the grace which will prove effectual, "Whoſoever hath, to him ſhall be given." In this ſenſe I admit, that converting grace may be called conditional. But where ſhall we find thoſe who have never reſiſted the Spirit of grace, or neglected the means of ſalvation?——To ſinners under this guilt and forfeiture, God can be under no obligation, by juſtice or promiſe, to grant the preſence of his renewing, or the return of his awakening grace, or even the prolongation of life. If the continuance of life, and the repeated excitations of the Spirit, are ſovereign and unpromiſed mercies, converting grace is no leſs ſo. *Saving* benefits are never promiſed to ſinners on any conditions, but thoſe which imply a change of character.

Now if among thoſe who have alike abuſed and forfeited the grace of God, ſome are reclaimed, and others left in a ſtate of ſin, I can ſee no violation of juſtice or of promiſe; for none, on either of theſe grounds, had a claim to the benefit. The former muſt adore God's mercy; the latter condemn their own perverſeneſs. The mercy granted to thoſe is no prejudice to theſe. Election then,

in relation to converting grace, is, in this ſenſe, abſolute, that it is the reſult of God's good pleaſure, and not the effect of any condition actually performed by the ſinner, in virtue of which he could claim it.

But then, if we conſider election, as it reſpects the final *beſtowment* of ſalvation, it is plainly conditional. *This* God gives, and this he *determines* to give only to ſuch as are made mete for it. To imagine, that he chooſes ſome to eternal life without regard to their faith and holineſs, is to ſuppoſe that ſome are ſaved without theſe qualifications, or ſaved contrary to his purpoſe. It is the expreſs declaration of ſcripture, "Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.—God hath choſen us to ſalvation through ſanctification of the ſpirit and belief of the truth." The terms of ſalvation are in the goſpel clearly ſtated, and we muſt not imagine, that, contrary to this ſtatement, there is a ſecret purpoſe, which will open the door of ſalvation to the finally impenitent, againſt whom the goſpel has ſhut it, or will ſhut the door againſt the ſincerely penitent, to whom the goſpel has opened it.

Whatever difficulties may attend this doctrine, ſo much is plain: They who are choſen to ſalvation, are choſen to be holy. And whatever doubts we may have concerning our own election, we may make it ſure, by adding to our faith the virtues and works of the goſpel. "If we do theſe things we ſhall never fall."

We proceed,

II. To conſider the *ſpiritual qualifications*, to which the Epheſians were choſen. "God choſe them to be holy and without blame before him in love."

There is a *relative* or *ceremonial* holineſs often applied to perſons and things, on account of their ſeparation from a common to a ſacred uſe. But more uſually the term denotes a *real, internal* pu-

rity, in oppoſition to moral pollution or *ſin*. This is the ſenſe of it in the text. To be *holy* is to be "*without blame* in the ſight of God."

Holineſs conſiſts in the conformity of the ſoul to the divine nature and will; and is oppoſed to all moral evil. In fallen creatures it begins in the renovation of the mind after the image of God.—Hence Chriſtians are ſaid "to be renewed in the ſpirit of their minds, and to be made new creatures." In this change the heart is formed to the love of God's character and will, and to a hatred of whatever appears contrary to them. "They who love the Lord, hate evil." This renovation, though imperfect in degree, yet extends to the whole man, ſo that "all things become new." And though the renewed Chriſtian in many things offends, yet he has reſpect to all God's commands. He deſires to be *without blame before God*. He contents not himſelf with his preſent imperfect meaſure of goodneſs, but is ſolicitous to cleanſe himſelf from all filthineſs, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of God. With this view he attends on all divine inſtitutions. He deſires the pure milk of God's word that he may grow thereby. He receives with meekneſs the engrafted word, hoping that it may ſave his ſoul. He is not diſguſted at a reproof or warning, becauſe it comes home to his caſe; he regards it as a word in ſeaſon, is thankful for it, and humbly applies it. When he hears the word, it is not that he may find matter for objection and cavil, or that he may apply what he hears to others, but that he may know himſelf more intimately, underſtand his duty more perfectly, and do God's will more acceptably.

When he comes to the ordinance of the ſupper, he deſires there to remember and ſhew forth the death of his Savior. He does not expect to be accepted, merely becauſe he eats and drinks in Chriſt's preſence; he conſiders that he muſt alſo depart

from iniquity. He is not aiming at a name to live, but at real improvement in the ſpiritual life. He attends to the great things exhibited in this ordinance, ſuch as the evil and danger of ſin, the ruined condition of the human race, the mercy of God in providing for them a Savior, and the love of Chriſt in giving himſelf a ſacrifice to God for the ſins of men. By the contemplation of theſe things he ſtrengthens his purpoſe of obedience, his faith in the Redeemer, his gratitude to God, and his love to all men.

We may obſerve farther, that the Apoſtle conſiders *love* as a main branch of holineſs. "God hath choſen us to be holy and without blame before him *in love.*"

When the word *love*, in the ſacred writings is uſed indefinitely, and without limitation to a particular object, love to men, and eſpecially to the brethren, is uſually intended. So the word is to be underſtood here, as appears from the 15th verſe of this chapter, and from the parallel place in the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, where the Apoſtle gives thanks for their faith in Chriſt and love to the *ſaints.*

Love is, every where in ſcripture, conſidered as a moſt eſſential part of the character of the ſaint. Charity out of a pure heart, is the end of the commandment. Chriſtians are above all things to put on charity, which is the bond of perfectneſs. Believers have purified their ſouls in obeying the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren. Brotherly kindneſs and charity are the graces, which complete the Chriſtian character.

Let us remember then, that without charity, all our pretenſions to goſpel holineſs are vain. We may talk with the tongue of men and angels; we may diſcover a fervent zeal in matters which bear ſome relation to religion; we may have much knowledge of the myſteries of revelation; we may

profeſs a ſtrong faith; we may be liberal of our ſubſtance in promoting ſome favorite deſigns, which we call *pious* ones; but if we have no charity, all is nothing—or nothing but glare and noiſe. That charity which belongs to the Chriſtian temper, is kind and longſuffering, oppoſite to pride, oſtentation and envy. It is humble and peaceable, meek and condeſcending—not eaſily provoked, not apt to cenſure. It rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. It beareth, hopeth and believeth all things.



SERMON IV.

EPHESIANS i. 4, 5, 6.

According as he hath choſen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love, having predeſtinated us to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will, to the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

THE nature of that *election* or *predeſtination*, of which theſe Epheſians were the ſubjects; and that *holineſs* and *love*, to which they were choſen, we illuſtrated in our preceding diſcourſe. We are now,

III. To conſider the *adoption* to which believers are predeſtinated.

Adoption is a word ſeveral times uſed by this Apoſtle, to expreſs the high privileges and exalted hopes of Chriſtians in this world, and the ſuperior dignity and happineſs reſerved for them in another. The word uſed by him, which we render adoption, properly ſignifies, *putting one in the place of a ſon.*

The word ſuggeſts to us this idea, that we have no *natural* right to the privileges of children; for though we are by our creation the children of God,

yet we are become diſobedient and rebellious children, and as ſuch are excluded from all title to the inheritance originally promiſed to obedience. Our *ſonſhip* is not our native right, but the effect of God's gracious adoption.

In this adoption are included ſeveral important privileges.

1. It implies a ſtate of *freedom*, in oppoſition to *bondage*. The Apoſtle ſays, *We have not received the ſpirit of bondage again to fear, but the ſpirit of adoption.*

Believers are free, as being *delivered from the bondage of ſin.*

This freedom they obtain in the renovation of their minds after the image of God. "As many as receive Chriſt, to them is given power to become the children of God, for they are born of him."—They are his children by a heavenly and ſpiritual birth. They are born from above—born of the Spirit; "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." They are no more the ſervants of ſin to obey it in the luſts thereof; but, being made free from ſin, they are become the ſervants of God, and they have their fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life.

They are free, as having *near acceſs to God and intimate communion with him.*

"Through Chriſt they have acceſs by the Spirit unto the Father. Becauſe they are ſons, God hath ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, and given them the ſpirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father."

Children are uſually admitted to that familiar intercourſe, which is denied to ſervants: So they, whom God has called to the adoption of children, may come boldly to his throne. They know where to find him, and may approach even to his ſeat.—They have liberty to enter into the moſt holy place by the blood of Chriſt. And God makes to them

ſome peculiar communications of his grace, to help their infirmities, ſtrengthen their good reſolutions, comfort them in afflictions, defend them againſt temptations, and lead them in the way everlaſting. "The ſecret of the Lord is with them who fear him, and he will ſhew them his covenant. The meek he will guide in judgment, and teach them his way." Chriſt ſays to his diſciples, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I have commanded you. I call you not ſervants, for a ſervant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things, which I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

2. Adoption brings us under *the peculiar care of God's providence.*

"God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." The juſt and the unjuſt partake of his common bounties. But he is eſpecially good to them who are of a clean heart. "His eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry. No good thing will be withheld from them who walk uprightly. Chriſt is made head over all things for the church."

Good and bad are ſubject to the common adverſities of life; but the afflictions, which befal the juſt, are ordered in a more immediate ſubſervience to their ſpiritual intereſt. "Whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth; he ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth. If we endure chaſtening, God dealeth with us as with ſons; for what ſon is he, whom the father chaſteneth not? And God chaſteneth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holineſs. And though no affliction for the preſent, is joyous, but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs."

Needful and ſeaſonable correction is one of the benefits of adoption—one of the privileges of God's children. The gracious intention of it is to recover them from their backſlidings—to wean them

from the world—to quicken them in their duty—to prove their ſincerity—and prepare them for heaven. David conſidered his adverſity as a fruit of God's parental faithfulneſs and love. "I know, O God, that thy judgments are right, and thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me."

Affliction, conſidered in itſelf, is grievous—conſidered as the effect of ſin, is humbling—but, conſidered as the allotment of divine wiſdom for our eternal advantage, it is matter of thankfulneſs and joy. "Count it all joy," ſays St. James, "when ye fall into divers temptations, for the trying of your faith worketh patience." "Rejoice," ſays St. Peter, "in as much as ye are partakers of the ſufferings of Chriſt, that when his glory ſhall be revealed, ye may be glad alſo with exceeding joy." The children of God muſt eſteem it a mighty privilege, that they are under the care of a wiſe and gracious parent, who will always treat them according to their wants; will give them proſperity as far as it is ſafe, and withdraw it when it would be dangerous; will ſend correction when it is needed, and remove it when the occaſion ceaſes; and, in a word, will cauſe all things to work for their good.

3. Adoption includes a title to *a glorious reſurrection from the dead*, and to *an eternal inheritance in the heavens.*

So this Apoſtle explains it in the eighth chapter to the Romans. "We have received the ſpirit of adoption—and the ſpirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirits, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Chriſt. If we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo be glorified with him; and all the ſufferings of the preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which ſhall be revealed in us. For the earneſt expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifeſtation of the ſons of God; for the creature ſhall be delivered from the bondage of corruption

into the glorious liberty of the ſons of God. And we, who have the firſt fruits of the ſpirit, groan within ourſelves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of the body." To the ſame purpoſe are the words of St. John, 1 Epiſtle, Chapter iii. "Behold now, what manner of love the father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God.—Now we are the ſons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know that when Chriſt ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is." So alſo ſays St. Peter, 1 Epiſtle i. 3. "Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath begotten us to a lively hope by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, fading not away, reſerved in heaven for us."

Now if believers are the children of God, then their temper muſt be a child like temper—a temper correſponding to their relation, condition and character. Let us therefore, as becomes obedient children, be holy in all manner of converſation, for he who has called us is holy. Let us be followers of God as dear children, walking worthy of him, who has called us to his kingdom and glory. Let us reverence and love our Supreme Parent, truſt ourſelves in the hands of his goodneſs, patiently bear the corrections of his love, humbly ſubmit to the diſpoſals of his wiſdom, maintain a daily correſpondence with him, attend to all the diſcoveries of his will, and in all things cheerfully comply with his commands, however contrary to our natural wiſhes. In imitation of his goodneſs let us do good as we have opportunity; and, regarding his profeſſed children as our brethren, let us walk in love to them, endeavoring to keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace; for he, who is the God and Father of all, is above all, through all, and in us all.

I proceed to our fourth,

IV. Obſervation: That all ſpiritual bleſſings are derived to us *through Jeſus Chriſt.* "God hath *choſen us in Chriſt*—predeſtinated us *to the adoption of children by Chriſt—made us accepted in the Beloved.*" It is the grand theme of the goſpel, that "God is in Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf."

The wiſdom of God ſaw fit to exerciſe mercy to ſinful men through the mediation of his Son, who came into our world, aſſumed our nature, and ſuffered death on the croſs for our ſins. What were all the reaſons, which, in the divine government, made ſuch a ſcheme of redemption neceſſary, it may be difficult for us to determine, and it is needleſs to inquire. We may, however, eaſily diſcern ſome important ends, which it anſwers. It clearly diſplays the holineſs, juſtice and mercy of God, the evil and demerit of ſin, the puniſhment which it deſerves, the grace of God to pardon it, and the amazing danger of continued impenitence in it:—We muſt therefore ſuppoſe, that theſe were among the reaſons why it was adopted.

As Chriſt is the Mediator, ſo all the bleſſings, which we enjoy and hope for, are repreſented as coming to us through him. We are *juſtified* through his blood—*adopted* in him—obtain the *promiſe* of the *Spirit* and are *ſanctified* in him—are admitted to the *means of ſalvation*, called to the *privileges of the goſpel*, and made partakers of *eternal life* through him.

The Apoſtle ſays, *God has choſen us in Chriſt, before the foundation of the world.* It was the eternal plan of divine wiſdom to ſave ſinners through Jeſus Chriſt, who, in the purpoſe of God, was a lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world.—Their ſalvation therefore cannot originate from any worthineſs in themſelves, but muſt depend on the interpoſition of the Savior; for every thing which

God has done, and which, even before the foundation of the world, he purpoſed to do for the recovery of ſinners, was in conſideration of that all perfect ſacrifice which has been offered on the croſs.

Now if all ſpiritual benefits come to us only through Chriſt, it is an obvious concluſion, that we muſt ſeek and expect them in his name: For we muſt evidently apply for them in the way in which God beſtows them. Faith in Chriſt, therefore, becomes a neceſſary condition of acceptance with God. However God may ſee fit to deal with ſome, who enjoy not our light, yet to us, who have known the myſtery of his will, faith in Chriſt is a neceſſary principle of religion. "For as much as we know, that we are not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Chriſt, who was ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifeſted in theſe laſt times for us, we muſt come to God by him, and by him believe in God, who raiſed him from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God."

V. The Apoſtle farther teaches us, that the reaſon of God's chooſing believers in Chriſt, and predeſtinating them to adoption, is *the good pleaſure of his will.*

If we admit that we are ſinful, fallen creatures, unworthy of God's favor, and inſufficient for our own redemption, which is a plain doctrine of the goſpel, and an evident dictate of experience, then our ſalvation muſt ultimately be reſolved into God's good pleaſure. There is no other ſource from which it can be derived. If death is our deſert, our deliverance muſt be by grace.

Final ſalvation is ſuſpended on the condition of our repentance, faith and holineſs; but it is not the leſs grace; for theſe previous requiſites are not merely of ourſelves; they are the gifts of God.—

The original plan of ſalvation is from him, not from us: The goſpel itſelf is a divine gift, not a human diſcovery: Our being under circumſtances to enjoy it is not the effect of our previous choice, but of God's ſovereign goodneſs: It is the good Spirit of God, who awakens the attention of ſinners to the goſpel, excites them to the uſe of the means in their hands, and makes theſe means ſucceſsful. The goſpel conſiders and treats us as free, but not as independent agents. In common life, the ſucceſs of our labors, as well as our ability to labor, depends on the ſupport and concurrence of Providence. In the ſpiritual life, we are no leſs dependent on the influence of grace. As our encouragement to worldly induſtry ariſes from a belief, that God's Providence always attends us, ſo our animation in the Chriſtian life ſprings from a perſuaſion, that God's grace is ſufficient for us. "The juſt live by faith."

Salvation is the purchaſe of Chriſt; but ſtill it no leſs originates from God's good pleaſure; "for in this was manifeſted the love of God toward us, becauſe he ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." "God, who is rich in mercy," ſays our Apoſtle, "for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt, that in the ages to come, he might ſhew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindneſs to us by Jeſus Chriſt. For by grace are ye ſaved through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God; not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt; for we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works, which God hath ordained, that we ſhould walk in them."

This brings us to our laſt obſervation,

VI. That the great purpoſe for which God has choſen and called us, is *the praiſe of the glory of his grace.*

God's grace is here repreſented as eminently glorious. Goodneſs is the glory of the divine character; grace is the glory of the divine goodneſs; the plan of ſalvation for ſinners by Jeſus Chriſt, is the glory of divine grace. Here grace is exerciſed toward the moſt unworthy creatures, in the beſtowment of the greateſt of all benefits, by a method the moſt wonderful and expenſive, even the death of a divine Savior. The ſalvation of the ſmalleſt ſinner is abundant grace; but where ſin has abounded, grace much more abounds.

God has made this diſplay of his grace, that unworthy creatures might apply to him for ſalvation. His calls, invitations and commands are to all, without diſtinction of character. "The righteouſneſs of God, through the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, is unto all, and upon all them who believe, and there is no difference." And leſt ſinners, conſcious of aggravated guilt, ſhould fear an excluſion from ſalvation, particular aſſurance is given, that Chriſt came to ſave the chief of ſinners; and ſuch are diſtinctly invited to come and receive the benefit of God's abundant grace.

The heralds of the goſpel were ſent forth to proclaim among the Gentiles the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, not only that men might know, what was the hope of their calling, and what the glory of the heavenly inheritance, but alſo that principalities and powers in heavenly places might learn more of the manifold wiſdom of God.

We are to praiſe the glory of God's grace by a cheerful compliance with the precepts, and thankful acceptance of the bleſſings of the goſpel. If, when God offers us his ſalvation, we will not receive it—if, when he holds out his pardon, we will continue in our ſins—if, when Jeſus has once died to expiate our guilt, we will open his bleeding wounds by our impenitence and unbelief—if, when the Spirit of grace ſtrives for our recovery,

we will reſiſt it—and when patience waits, we will harden our hearts; we treat the God of heaven with ſuch ingratitude—we trample on his grace with ſuch contempt, that the heavens muſt be aſtoniſhed. If he who wilfully tranſgreſſes God's law deſerves death without mercy, of how much ſorer puniſhment will they be judged worthy, who thus deſpiſe and abuſe his grace!

We are to praiſe God's glorious grace by a holy life. We then honor it beſt, when under the influence of it we have our converſation as becomes the goſpel. "The love of Chriſt conſtrains us," ſays the Apoſtle, "becauſe we thus judge—that if Chriſt died for us, we who live ſhould not henceforth live to ourſelves, but to him who died for us and roſe again; therefore, if any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature." He rejects with abhorrence the idea, that we ſhould continue in ſin, when grace abounds; for, ſays he, "How ſhall we, who are dead to ſin, live any longer therein?"

Chriſtians are "a choſen generation, a peculiar people, that they ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes of him, who hath called them out of darkneſs into his marvellous light." Since they have obtained ſuch mercy, let them abſtain from fleſhly luſts, and have their converſation in all good works.

We are to glorify God's grace by encouraging others to accept it. "God hath quickened us in Chriſt," ſays the Apoſtle, "that in the ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindneſs to us by Jeſus Chriſt." Of himſelf he ſays, "I obtained mercy, that in me Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all longſuffering for a pattern to them, who ſhould afterward believe in him to life everlaſting." St. Peter exhorts thoſe who had been called into God's marvellous light, "Have your converſation honeſt among the Gentiles, that by your good works, which they behold, they may glorify God in the day of viſitation." If, while

we profeſs to be partakers of God's grace, we by the impurity of our lives ſtrengthen bold tranſgreſſors, and lay ſtumbling blocks in the way of little ones, we diſhonor and reproach that grace which we ought to exalt.

Believers will in a more perfect manner ſhew forth the praiſe of God's glorious grace in the future world. Grace will there be all the burthen of their ſong; and *this* they will ſing in the higheſt ſtrains. They will tune their harps to ſound the wonders of Creation and Providence: But when the glory of divine grace in the ſalvation of ſinners, eſpecially in their own ſalvation, becomes the theme, then they will touch the moſt ſonorous ſtrings. When they ſtrike on this new ſong, "Thou art worthy, for thou haſt redeemed us by thy blood, and made us kings and prieſts unto thee," not only ſaints, but angels all around will catch the ſound, and every creature in heaven, and thoſe redeemed from the earth, will feel the theme, and join their voices, ſaying, "Worthy is the lamb, that was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and glory, and bleſſing; and be theſe aſcribed to him who ſitteth on the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever."

What now remains, my brethren, but that we all joyfully accept the overtures of divine grace? Are you convinced of your guilty, helpleſs condition? Here in Chriſt Jeſus is grace to help, and mercy to pardon you. Say not in your hearts, "We are by the purpoſe of God excluded from ſalvation."—God's purpoſe is not contrary to his word; his election contradicts not his grace. You are already choſen to the enjoyment of the goſpel: You have already been made partakers of ſome awakening influences of the Spirit: You have been called by the invitations of God. His word excludes you not, and you have no right to exclude yourſelves. Remember, that they who are choſen to ſalvation,

are choſen to be holy. In a way of faith and penitence ſalvation is offered; in this way make your election ſure. Comply with God's calls—his word will never fail. Remember your dependence on his grace, ſeek it humbly, accept it thankfully, receive it not in vain, walk worthy of him who has called you to his kingdom and glory.





SERMON V.

EPHESIANS i. 7, 8.

In whom we have redemption through his blood the forgiveneſs of ſins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wiſdom and prudence.

THE Apoſtle, in the third verſe of the context, celebrates the grace of God in the ſpiritual bleſſings beſtowed on our fallen race; and then proceeds to enumerate theſe bleſſings. "He hath choſen us to be holy—predeſtinated us to the adoption of children—made us accepted in the beloved—granted us redemption through Chriſt's blood—revealed to us the myſtery of his will—gathered both Jews and Gentiles together in one body—and ſealed us with the holy ſpirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance."

The bleſſing mentioned in the text, is our *redemption*.

For the illuſtration of this privilege we may conſider—Who are the *ſubjects* of it?—What is the *nature* of it?—The *way* in which it is procured—The *fountain* from which it originates—And the *wiſdom* diſplayed in it.

I. We are to conſider, Who are the *ſubjects* of this redemption?

The Apoſtle ſays, "WE have redemption;" that is, "*We* who were choſen in Chriſt to be *holy*—*we* who have *believed* and *truſted* in Chriſt, have redemption."

The redemption purchaſed by Chriſt, though offered without diſtinction to all who hear the goſpel, is actually *beſtowed* only on thoſe, who repent of their ſins and believe in the Savior. "The redeemer comes to thoſe who turn from ungodlineſs." It is ſin which has brought us under condemnation—It is by repentance of ſin that we obtain redemption. The benefits of the goſpel are free, but not indiſcriminate. They are deſigned for as many as will receive them on the terms propoſed, but not for all promiſcuouſly whether they comply with the terms or not.

The idea which ſome fondly entertain, that redemption is abſolutely univerſal, and in fact comprehends all men, is without ſcriptural foundation. There are indeed ſome expreſſions which import univerſality. Chriſt is ſaid "to have given himſelf a ranſom for *all*, and to be made a propitiation for the ſins of the *whole world*." But ſuch expreſſions muſt always be underſtood in a ſenſe conſiſtent with the terms ſtated in the goſpel. The *price* paid for our redemption is *ſufficient* for all. It is deſigned for the benefit of ſinners in all *nations* and *ages*. It is not, like the legal expiations, of limited efficacy and temporary uſe. The *offer* of ſalvation is made to ſinners of all *characters*, and all who *believe* will be made partakers of it. "The righteouſneſs of God through the faith of Chriſt, is unto all them who believe, and there is no difference." In theſe reſpects Chriſt died for *all*, and gave himſelf a ranſom for *all*. But the benefits of redemption will be actually beſtowed only on thoſe who are penitent, faithful and holy—not on all indiſcriminately, whether penitent or impenitent; whether believing or unbelieving. The goſ-

pel expreſsly aſſures us, that without repentance, faith and holineſs, there is no ſalvation—that Chriſt came to ſave us from our ſins, to deliver us from this evil world, and to redeem us from our vain converſation—that he bore our ſins on the croſs, that we, being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs. If, expecting to be juſtified by Chriſt, we are ſtill found ſinners, and emboldened to continue ſuch, we treat, as the miniſter of ſin, that Savior who came to call us to repentance, and to purify to himſelf a people zealous of good works.

II. We are to conſider the *nature* of this redemption.

There is a twofold redemption mentioned in the writings of this Apoſtle; the redemption of the ſoul from the guilt of ſin by pardon, and the redemption of the body from the power of the grave by the reſurrection. It is the former of theſe, which is intended in the text; for ſo it is explained; *We have redemption, the forgiveneſs of ſins.* The latter is intended verſe 14, where the Apoſtle ſpeaks of the Spirit, as "the earneſt of our inheritance, until *the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion;*" and Roman 8th chapter, where the creature is ſaid to "wait for the adoption even *the redemption of the body.*" But theſe two privileges are connected. The remiſſion of ſin, which is a releaſe from our obligation to puniſhment, is accompanied with a title to eternal life. "Whom God juſtifies, them he alſo glorifies.

The divine law condemns thoſe, who continue not in all things written therein to do them. As we have all ſinned, ſo, conſidered in relation to the law only, we are all under condemnation. Forgiveneſs frees us from this condemnation, and places us in a ſtate of favor with God. It is expreſſed in ſcripture by a variety of phraſes; ſuch as the *blotting out* of our iniquities—the *forgiveneſs* of our *debts*—making us *accepted*—admitting us to *peace*

with God—juſtifying us from our ſins, and unto life —imputing *righteouſneſs*, and *not* imputing *ſin.*— Theſe phraſes all import the ſame thing: Our deliverance from that ſtate of guilt, in which we ſtood expoſed to ſuffer the demerit of our ſins; and our gracious acceptance to a ſtate of peace with God, as if we had not offended.

The terms of this forgiveneſs are called repentance, faith, regeneration and converſion, or turning to God; all which expreſs the ſame thing in different points of view, even a change of ſoul from the habitual love of ſin to the love and ſervice of God. Whenever the ſinner, convinced of his ſins, renounces them with godly ſorrow and in hearty purpoſe, committing himſelf to the mercy of God in Chriſt with reſolutions of future obedience, he is diſcharged from guilt, and entitled to eternal life. Where this change is real, there will be fruits mete for repentance. From theſe fruits ariſes a comfortable evidence of the ſincerity of the heart, and a good hope of the heavenly inheritance.

III. The next thing here obſervable is, the *way* and *manner*, in which believers become partakers of this privilege. *Through the blood of Chriſt.*

The Apoſtles, and eſpecially St. Paul, in their preaching and writings, dwell much on the death of Chriſt, as the ground of our hope. Chriſt crucified was their favorite theme.

The infinite mercy of God inclines him to forgive ſinners; but his wiſdom ſaw fit to grant them forgiveneſs in ſuch a way as ſhould clearly diſplay his righteouſneſs, as well as his mercy. The puniſhment of our iniquities he therefore laid on his own Son, who voluntarily gave himſelf for us, an offering and a ſacrifice to God for a ſweet ſmelling ſavour.

The Apoſtle takes notice, that Jeſus Chriſt, through whoſe blood we obtain forgiveneſs, is *the Beloved.* On this circumſtance greatly depends

the value of his ſacrifice. "He hath made us accepted in *the beloved*, in whom we have redemption through his blood.—God hath made him to be ſin for us, who knew no ſin.—He hath not ſpared his own Son, but delivered him up for us—Chriſt was manifeſted to bear our ſins, and in him was no ſin—God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

This character of Chriſt ſhews the excellence of his ſacrifice. "He through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God. Such an high prieſt became us, who is holy, harmleſs, undefiled, ſeparate from ſinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needed not, as the ancient prieſts, to offer ſacrifice, firſt for his own ſins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himſelf." Our redemption is aſcribed to the ſufferings of Chriſt, eſpecially to his laſt ſufferings—to his blood—to his death on the croſs. But his obedience, his holy life was neceſſary to our redemption, as without it there could have been no atoning virtue in his death.

The character of Chriſt, as *the beloved*, diſplays the grace of God in giving him for us. From hence the Apoſtle infers the greatneſs of God's compaſſion for a guilty world, and his readineſs to grant all bleſſings to believers. "He who ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, How ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?"

IV. We may obſerve the *fountain* from which our redemption flows; *the riches of God's grace.*

Sin deſerves puniſhment, and the remiſſion of deſerved puniſhment is mere grace. Pardon merited, is a contradiction. Every bleſſing beſtowed on ſinners is by grace: But the bleſſing of forgiveneſs is according to the *riches*, the *exceeding*, the *unſearchable* riches of grace,

If it be grace in Almighty God to beſtow on ſinners the ſmalleſt favor, what abundant grace muſt it be to forgive *all* our *innumerable* tranſgreſſions—to forgive them *wholly* and *finally*—not only to exempt us from puniſhment, but make us *accepted*, as if we had not offended—to own us as his *children*—to admit us to communion with himſelf—to grant us the conſtant preſence of his good Spirit—and vouchſafe to us eternal life! The richneſs and variety of the bleſſings ſhew that they flow from a full and liberal fountain.

God's grace appears richer ſtill, when we conſider our own *unworthineſs*. We are not worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies, which God has ſhewed us; much leſs of *this*, the *greateſt* of all. A ſenſe of guilt filled the Apoſtle with admiring thoughts of God's grace in his ſalvation. "I was the chief of ſinners; but I obtained mercy—and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant."

The grace of God is ſtill more wonderful in the way and manner of its diſpenſation. "We have redemption *through Chriſt's blood*, according to the riches of God's grace.—He has commended his love toward us, in that while we were ſinners Chriſt died for us."

V. Our text teaches us, that in this diſpenſation of mercy, *God has abounded to us in all wiſdom and prudence.*

"Manifold are God's works; in wiſdom he has made them all." But the moſt glorious diſplay of his wiſdom is in the work of our redemption.

Here the perfections of God appear in the brighteſt luſtre and moſt beautiful harmony.

He has manifeſted the exceeding riches of his mercy in giving his own Son to redeem a guilty race—his infinite purity, and immutable juſtice, in requiring ſuch a grand and awful ſacrifice in order to the remiſſion of human guilt—the perfect rectitude of his law in forgiving our tranſgreſſions only

through the obedience and ſufferings of his Son—his inviolable faithfulneſs and truth in executing the threatening of death on him who conſented to bear our iniquities. Here we ſee the mercy, juſtice, holineſs and truth of God, all united and operating in concert; ſo that, as the Pſalmiſt ſays; "mercy and truth are met together, righteouſneſs and peace have kiſſed each other. Truth ſprings from the earth—and righteouſneſs looks down from heaven: The Lord gives grace and glory; his ſalvation is nigh to them that fear him, and glory dwells on the earth. He ſpeaks peace to his people in ſuch a manner, that they may not turn again to folly."

In this diſpenſation there is a door of hope opened to the moſt unworthy.

A ſinner, under deep conviction of his guilt, is apt to fear, that there can be no forgiveneſs for him. When Peter repreſented to the Jews their horrible wickedneſs in crucifying the Lord of glory, the Redeemer of ſinners, they were pricked in the heart and ſaid, "*What ſhall WE do?* You teach us, that whoſoever ſhall call on the name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved. But do *we* come within this general encouragement? We have with wicked hands crucified and ſlain this Savior. Is there any pardon for *us?*" Yes; ſays the Apoſtle, "the promiſe is to you; it is to all: Repent therefore for the remiſſion of ſins." In ſuch a caſe as this, ſinners need ſome other ground of hope, than a general declaration, that God is good. For though they are perſuaded of God's goodneſs, they cannot from thence certainly conclude that ſin may be forgiven—much leſs that all ſins, ſuch ſins as they have committed, will be forgiven, and the offenders received to favor. To penitent ſouls ſuch grace might appear incredible. To remove from them all fears and ſuſpicions, God has diſplayed the riches of his grace in giving his Son to be a propitiation for ſin.

not his own Son, when our iniquities were laid upon him, ſurely on the unbelieving and impenitent he will caſt the fury of his wrath, and will not ſpare.

But, on the other hand, What glorious hopes are ſet before thoſe, who by repentance flee from the wrath to come! God, who has done ſo much for the ſalvation of a guilty race, will aſſuredly accept thoſe who ſubmit to him; will aſſiſt their endeavors to ſerve him, and will reward their humble obedience. And how glorious muſt be that reward, which is purchaſed for believers, not by works of righteouſneſs which they have done, but by the all perfect obedience and moſt precious blood of a divine Redeemer. "The gift by grace, which is through Jeſus Chriſt, will abound to the faithful —They will receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteouſneſs; and grace will reign through righteouſneſs unto eternal life." Juſtly then might the Apoſtle ſay, "God has abounded to us in all wiſdom and prudence."

Our ſubject ought to awaken the guilty and impenitent, and urge their ſpeedy eſcape from the evil which threatens them. Great is the demerit of ſin, or ſo coſtly a ſacrifice for its expiation would not have been required. But let ſinners remember, that their guilt, great as it is, will be greatly aggravated by their contempt of the blood of Chriſt, and their abuſe of the riches of divine grace. If he who deſpiſes the law of God deſerves death without mercy; how ſore will be the puniſhment of thoſe, who tread under foot the Son of God, reſiſt the grace of the holy Spirit, and profane the blood of the covenant!

What a happy ſecurity believers enjoy! They are made accepted in the Beloved. And if they are accepted in him, they are doubtleſs ſafe.—There is no condemnation to them who are in

Chriſt Jeſus. Nothing ſhall be able to ſeparate them from the love of God, which is in him.— Their life is hidden with Chriſt in God; and when Chriſt ſhall appear, they will appear with him in glory.



SERMON VI.

EPHESIANS i. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Having made known unto us the myſtery of his will, according to the good pleaſure, which he hath purpoſed in himſelf, that, in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Chriſt, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth; even in him, in whom alſo we have obtained an inheritance, being predeſtinated according to the purpoſe of him, who worketh all things after the counſel of his own will, that we ſhould be to the praiſe of his glory, who firſt truſted in Chriſt.

REDEMPTION from the preſent guilt and the future puniſhment of ſin, is a bleſſing which comes to ſinners from the grace of God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. This bleſſing is granted, not indiſcriminately to all, but peculiarly to thoſe who believe and truſt in Jeſus Chriſt, and who repent and become holy before God. Theſe qualifications are the gifts of God, but gifts uſually beſtowed in a way of means. That divine operation, which diſpoſes the hearts of ſinners to repentance and faith, is afforded to them in their attendance on the inſtructions of the goſpel. The grace of God, however, in bringing ſinners to repentance of ſin, and faith in the Savior, is no leſs

revelation. He ſays, "God has *made known* to us the myſtery of his will." He calls the goſpel a *revelation* of the myſtery, which had been hidden from preceding ages. It is a myſtery in regard to thoſe ages, in which it was kept ſecret; but not in regard to the ages, in which it is *revealed*, ſo that all men may *ſee* and *underſtand* it. This is the uſual ſenſe of the word.

And it is not the *whole* goſpel that is in this ſenſe called a myſtery; but only ſome particular doctrines of it. There are many things in it, ſuch as the being and providence of God, and the great and leading duties of morality, which even the Heathens themſelves acknowledged. But the method of our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt is a myſtery, which never could have been known, if God had not revealed it. The Apoſtle ſays, "We ſpeak the wiſdom of God in a myſtery, even the hidden wiſdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; but God hath revealed it to us by his ſpirit, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God, which things we alſo ſpeak." The myſtery of the goſpel was firſt revealed by the ſpirit, to the prophets; then more fully to the Apoſtles; and by them preached with great plainneſs to the world. Their preaching was a *revelation* of the *myſtery* of God's will concerning the way of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt.

There are, indeed, many things in the goſpel, which are, and will remain incomprehenſible to human reaſon; but, though we cannot fully *comprehend* them, we may ſufficiently *underſtand* them. The promiſes of God, the terms of happineſs, and the duties required of us, are clearly ſtated. What ſalvation is, how it was procured, in what way it is conveyed, and where to look for help in all our weakneſſes and wants, we are plainly inſtructed. No farther revelation do we need to teach us the

acceptable will of God, and lead us along toward heaven. The one which we have is perfect. They who pretend to add to it, bring on themſelves the curſes written in it.

How abſurd, how impious is it then, to repreſent the goſpel as a myſtery, which cannot be underſtood without a new revelation immediately from God! If the goſpel is a *revelation* of the myſtery, we are not to expect a revelation of this revelation, as if it were a myſtery ſtill. The Apoſtle ſays, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach another goſpel, let him be accurſed." The Apoſtles had the divine myſtery communicated to them by the Spirit; their divine inſpiration they proved by miracles; and what was imported to them by inſpiration, they have communicated to the world by preaching. The goſpel, confirmed by divine teſtimony, we are to make the only rule of our faith. We need the direction and aſſiſtance of the Spirit in all the duties of the religious life; but we need no farther *revelation;* nor does the Spirit operate to give us new diſcoveries, but to aſſiſt us in underſtanding and obeying the goſpel which is already given us. Though it were conceded, that immediate revelations were now made, yet theſe could be of uſe only to the perſons who received them; they could do no good to the world, unleſs their divine origin were proved by miracles; and therefore all pretenſions of this kind are to be diſcarded.

Let us attend to the myſtery of God's will, which is made known to us; prove what is acceptable in his ſight; abhor that which is evil; and cleave to that which is good.

We may remark,

2. That God has made known to us his will, *according to the good pleaſure, which he purpoſed in himſelf.*

It is not owing to any worthineſs in us—to any thing which he had done, or could do—to any choice or application which we had made; but to God's wiſe and gracious purpoſe, that a revelation is given to the world—that we were born in an age, and in a land of goſpel light—that we are diſtinguiſhed from thoſe nations, which ſtill ſit in the region and ſhadow of death. It is God who makes us to differ—we have nothing but what we received. We may adopt the words of our Savior, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou haſt revealed to babes the things which thou haſt hidden from the wiſe and prudent; even ſo, Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight."

We may, perhaps, wonder, why the goſpel revelation was not made earlier, and why it is not now more extenſive. But we are to remember, that "God works all things according to the counſel of his will;" and, though the reaſon of his adminiſtrations is not made known to us, yet they are all directed by conſummate wiſdom. To thoſe who enjoy the goſpel it is a free gift from God, not the fruit of their deſert, but of his good pleaſure, which he purpoſed in himſelf. He is ſovereign in the diſtribution of his favors. His goodneſs to us is no wrong to the Heathens. He is not chargeable with injuſtice in granting to ſome the privileges which he withholds from others; for none could demand them as their due. He was no more bound to place all men under equal advantages, than to endue all with equal abilities, or to make men equal to angels. He may do what he will with his own. One thing, however, is certain, that to whom much is given, of them much will be required. In the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment, he will take into conſideration, not only men's different works, but their various abilities, opportunities and advantages; and he will render to them what is right, according to what they have receiv-

ed and what they have done. "As many as have ſinned without law, will periſh without law; and as many as have ſinned under the law will be judged by the law, in that day when God will judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt, according to the goſpel."

It is ſometimes inquired, whether they, who know not the goſpel are capable of ſalvation? But this is a queſtion of little importance to *us*. The judge of all the earth will do right. It is a more intereſting inquiry, whether we have complied with the goſpel? However, God may deal with Heathens, to whom his word has never come, if we put it far from us, we judge ourſelves unworthy of eternal life. When men aſk, Whether few ſhall be ſaved? The anſwer formerly given, is pertinent ſtill, "ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, for many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able."

II. The Apoſtle goes on to inſtruct us, that the purpoſe of God, in making known to us the myſtery of his will, is, *that in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Chriſt, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth.*

There are ſeveral things here worthy of diſtinct notice.

1. The goſpel is called *the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times.* So it is ſaid elſewhere, "*In due time* Chriſt died for us." "When *the fulneſs of the times* was come, God ſent forth his Son."

The Jews divided the duration of the world into three periods; one before the law, one under the law, and the other under the Meſſiah. In regard to this diſtinction, the goſpel age is the fulneſs, or completion of the times.

This is the laſt diſpenſation of religion, that will ever be made; a kingdom which will never be moved; never be ſet aſide to make room for a better. The goſpel day is therefore called the *laſt*

times—the latter days—the *end of the world*, or of the *ages*.

The goſpel was introduced at the time, exactly ordained in the purpoſe, and expreſsly predicted in the word of God; and in this ſenſe, it may be called the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times. The propheſies of the Old Teſtament, ſo accurately ſtated the time of the Meſſiah's appearance, that, as the prophet ſays, he was the *deſire*, or expectation *of all nations*. At the time of his coming, many among the Gentiles, as well as Jews, were earneſtly looking for ſome extraordinary perſon, who ſhould take into his hands, the government of the nations.

This was alſo the fitteſt time for the introduction of the goſpel diſpenſation. All things were ready for the appearance of the great Redeemer to ſet up his kingdom in the world. God for many ages, had been making preparations for this grand event. He foretold it to our firſt parents after their lapſe---to many godly men before the flood—and again to the patriarchs after it. From among the nations of the earth, he choſe the poſterity of Abraham to be his peculiar people. To them he committed his oracles, gave his ordinances, and ſent his prophets to notify them of this diſpenſation, and of the time when, and the manner in which it ſhould be introduced. As the time drew nearer, the propheſies became more plain and explicit. The frequent captivities of the Jews were the means of ſpreading among other nations the knowledge of theſe propheſies and of the great events which they foretold. The Jews were at this time ſo corrupt, that they needed, more than ever before, the miniſtrations of a teacher from heaven. —To them the goſpel was firſt preached; but by their obſtinate impenitence and unbelief, they put it from them; and by their fall ſalvation came to the Gentiles. Captivated by their enemies, and

ſcattered over the face of the earth, they became the providential inſtruments of diffuſing the knowledge of the Savior. The improvement of learning, awakened the attention of mankind to this new revelation and to the heralds who proclaimed it. The extenſive power of the Romans, their intercourſe with all nations, and the univerſal peace which now reigned in the world, opened a way for the more eaſy and ſpeedy propagation of the goſpel. The ſpirit of inquiry, which prevailed among the learned, led them ſtrictly to examine the nature and evidences of this new religion; ſo that there could be no ground to alledge, that it obtained credit through the ignorance and credulity of mankind. All circumſtances concurred to make the time of Chriſt's appearance the moſt ſuitable for the eſtabliſhment and diffuſion of his religion; and therefore it may, with great propriety, be called *the fulneſs of the times.*

Let us adore the wiſdom of God, who orders all events in the moſt perfect manner, and accompliſhes all his purpoſes in the moſt convenient time.—Let us rejoice that the world and all things in it, are under the government of an all perfect Being. The wiſdom which appears in this diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times, encourages us to commit all our ways to him, to truſt all our concerns in his hands, to acquieſce in all the diſpoſals of his Providence, and to do his will without murmuring and diſputing.

2. The Apoſtle teaches us, that one end of this diſpenſation was, *that God might gather together in one, all things in Chriſt:* Or, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, in the next chapter, *that he might make both* Jew *and* Gentile *to be one, might break down the middle wall of partition between them, might aboliſh the enmity, reconcile both to himſelf in one body,* or one church, *and make of the twain one new man.*

Though God firſt admitted the Jews to the peculiar privileges of his church, yet he promiſed, that, when the Savior ſhould come, all nations in him ſhould be bleſſed. Jeſus confined his perſonal miniſtry, and he firſt ſent his Apoſtles to the Jews; for to them the word of God was firſt to be ſpoken. But after his reſurrection he commanded them to go and preach the goſpel to all nations, and to gather into one church all men in Chriſt, of whatever nation they were.

We ſee then, and it is worthy to be remembered, that one great deſign of the Chriſtian diſpenſation is, to form one body in Chriſt—to collect one church, one great kingdom under him. The convenience of worſhip requires Chriſtians to erect particular churches; but all theſe are members of one body; for Chriſt is not divided. The body which is one hath many members; but all theſe are one body in Chriſt. Therefore, as our Apoſtle ſays, there ſhould be no ſchiſm, no rent or diviſion, in the body. We ſhould regard, as members of Chriſt's church, all who in every place call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, both theirs and ours. All particular churches ought to own one another as members of the ſame great body, and have fellowſhip together as ſuch. Though they meet in different places, entertain different ſentiments in the leſs important things of religion, and adopt ſome different uſages in the forms of diſcipline and worſhip, yet, as long as they hold the head and call on the name of the ſame Lord, they are to treat one another as ſiſter churches. and to cooperate in building up the ſame grand cauſe which all profeſs to regard.

Hence then it appears, that they who break and diſunite the church of Chriſt, and create ſchiſms and diviſions in it—they who ſeparate from, and renounce communion with Chriſtian ſocieties without cauſe, or for ſmall and trivial differences—they

who, inſtead of laboring to reform what they ſee irregular in churches, endeavor to pull them down, and on the ruins to build up a party of their own; they are in direct oppoſition to the will of Chriſt and to the deſign of his goſpel. They ſerve not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own paſſions and luſts. They counteract the Apoſtolic plan, which was to collect into one all things in Chriſt.

3. The Apoſtle farther teaches us, that the goſpel is intended to unite in Chriſt all things, *both which are in heaven, and which are in earth.*

The church of Chriſt conſiſts of *the whole family in heaven and earth.* The ſaints in heaven were ſaved in the ſame way, in which we alſo muſt be ſaved. They are worſhipping the ſame God and the ſame Redeemer, whom we profeſs to worſhip. They are ſubject to the ſame Lord, to whom we are ſubject: Yea, all the angels adore and obey him. They are miniſtering ſpirits to the church below. They are the ſervants of the ſame Lord Jeſus, and own themſelves to be but fellow ſervants with the ſaints on earth. The religion of the ſaints above and of thoſe below *is* in ſubſtance the ſame; a religion of piety and benevolence. The chief difference lies in the degrees of perfection. The church in heaven and the church on earth are, in ſome reſpects, one church united. Believers are fellow citizens with the ſaints in glory, and of the houſehold of God. The deſign of the goſpel is to form the members of Chriſt's church on earth to a nearer reſemblance of ſaints and angels in heaven, and to bring them to the general aſſembly and church of holy beings, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; and thus finally to gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth.

Here, my brethren, is a powerful argument for Chriſtian love. In heaven charity never fails. If

we all profeſs to be ſeeking the ſame heaven, and hope to be gathered in one church there, let us exerciſe that love to one another, which is neceſſary to prepare us for heaven, and without which heaven would ceaſe to be itſelf.

Here is alſo an argument for Chriſtian candor, If the ſaints, yea, the angels in heaven, who are ſo exalted in dignity—ſo improved in knowledge—ſo perfect in holineſs, ſtill own the church on earth, miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation, have intercourſe with them as one family, and rejoice in the expectation of receiving them to their company above; ſurely we ought to condeſcend to our weaker brethren, bear their infirmities, miniſter to their wants and receive them to our fellowſhip. If, becauſe we imagine ourſelves more pure, more wiſe, or more ſound in faith, than our brethren, we exclude them from our charity, bid them ſtand by themſelves, and warn them not to come near us in acts of holy communion, our temper is utterly unlike to that of the bleſſed above. Ye, whoſe religious zeal runs into bigotry, and whoſe ſpiritual pride has rooted out charity, look up to heaven—ſee the condeſcenſion, the love, the humility which is there, and be aſhamed of yourſelves. Without ſomething of the ſame ſpirit, you abſurdly claim a relation to the houſehold of Chriſt.

III. In the words of our text, there is another paſſage, which we will briefly notice. In him we have obtained an inheritance, *that we ſhould be to the praiſe of his glory, who firſt truſted in Chriſt.*

Theſe words are ſpoken to the believing Jews. They were the firſt who truſted in Chriſt. The word of God was firſt ſent to the Jewiſh nation; of that nation were the firſt believers; and in Jeruſalem was the firſt Chriſtian church. They are ſaid to have obtained an inheritance, being predeſtinated according to God's purpoſe. They were once, as a nation, choſen to be God's diſtinguiſhed

and peculiar people; but becauſe they generally rejected the Savior, they as a nation were rejected of God. Thoſe, however, who truſted in Chriſt, had ſtill a place in God's inheritance, and enjoyed a portion in his kingdom. They, with the believing Gentiles, were made heirs of God, not only to the privileges of his church on earth, but to an inheritance alſo in the heavens. In both theſe reſpects believers have obtained an inheritance.

They enjoy the privileges of God's children on earth, ſuch as his word, worſhip and ordinances, the preſence of his Spirit, the protection of his Providence, acceſs to him in prayer, and an intereſt in his promiſes. And they are made mete for, are ſealed unto, and become heirs of a glorious inheritance in heaven. This is ſo clearly made over, and ſo firmly ſecured to them by God's gracious promiſe, that they are ſaid to have already *obtained* it. They are by faith united to Jeſus, and are made joint heirs with him, who, as their forerunner, has gone to heaven and taken poſſeſſion of the inheritance for them. Their life is hidden with Chriſt in God—the glory is laid up, and the inheritance is reſerved for them—they are riſen with Chriſt, and made to ſit together with him in heavenly places.

The Apoſtle inſtructs them, that, as they had *firſt* obtained an inheritance, and *firſt* truſted in Chriſt, ſo they ſhould firſt be *to the praiſe of God's glory.*

All Chriſtians are bound to glorify God, and ſhew forth the praiſes of him, who has called them out of darkneſs into his marvellous light. They are to abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God. But there are ſome peculiar obligations on thoſe, who firſt truſted in Chriſt. They, who enjoy ſuperior religious advantages—who through grace have been made partakers of the bleſſings of the goſpel—who have felt the power and taſted the

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pleaſures of religion—who have taken on them the Chriſtian profeſſion and character—who have advanced in age and made proficiency in knowledge, *they* ſhould remember, that, of all men, they are bound to live to the praiſe of God's glorious grace. They ſhould uſe their influence for the converſion of ſinners, for the confirmation of weak believers, for the advancement of religion, and for the promotion of Chriſt's kingdom. If they walk according to the courſe of the world, they diſhonor the name by which they are called, embolden the wicked, and cauſe the way of truth to be evil ſpoken of. If they, who profeſs to have believed in Chriſt, and to have obtained an inheritance with him, ſtill live, as if their only inheritance and only hope were in this world, they expoſe the goſpel to contempt.

Let us then, as many as call ourſelves Chriſtians, walk worthy of our name and character. Let us be blameleſs and harmleſs, the ſons of God without rebuke. Let us have our converſation as becomes the goſpel, that none may ſpeak againſt us as evil doers, but by our good works, which they behold, may glorify God in the day of viſitation.

Let us admire and adore that all wiſe and almighty Being, who works all things after the counſel of his will, and makes them all ſubſervient to the praiſe of his glory.

God brings forth good out of evil, and overrules to the honor of his great name thoſe things which in themſelves have a contrary aſpect. The apoſtaſy of man, though in its nature it tended to God's diſhonor, has been the occaſion of diſplaying his glory in the brighteſt luſtre. The grace and mercy of God in the ſalvation of penitent believing ſouls, appear more glorious, than they would have appeared, in any way at preſent known to us, if there had been no ſuch worthleſs objects in his creation. The holineſs and juſtice of God are more ſtrangely

repreſented in Chriſt's ſufferings for our ſins, than in any other way with which we are acquainted.— The angels, who dwell in God's preſence, know more of his manifold wiſdom and unbounded love, by means of the redemption, than they had ever before learned from his other works. The evil of ſin is in this diſpenſation more awfully manifeſted, than in all the prohibitions and threatnings of the law. Though the ſins of men tend to diſturb the harmony of God's government, and mar the beauty of his creation, yet he can overrule them to a different purpoſe, and make them ſubſervient to his glory, and to the eventual happineſs of his obedient ſubjects.

Shall we then ſay, Sin is not an evil; or the evil of it is ſmall? No: But we will ſay, God's wiſdom is great and his ways unſearchable. Shall we make light of ſin, becauſe God can turn it to his own praiſe? No: But we will admire his goodneſs, wiſdom and power, who does great things, which we know not and cannot comprehend. Shall we ſay, that ſin is a neceſſary part of God's plan, becauſe ſome happy events have followed from particular tranſgreſſions? No: But we will remember, that the ſame infinite wiſdom, which could make good to follow from ſuch unpromiſing and untoward means, can never be at a loſs for means to accompliſh the purpoſes of unbounded benevolence.— When we ſee the miſchief and confuſion, which wicked men make in the world, we will rejoice, that God reigns, and that he turns to good the things, which they intend for evil. We will not be anxious and diſtruſtful in any circumſtances, for he who has done ſo great things for the redemption of fallen men, will never forſake the ſouls, who love and ſerve him, but will cauſe all things to work together for their good.

SERMON VII.

EPHESIANS i. 13, 14.

In whom ye alſo truſted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the goſpel of your ſalvation; in whom alſo after that ye believed, ye were ſealed with that holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion, unto the praiſe of his glory.

IN the days of the Apoſtles, there were Jews ſcattered through moſt of the provinces of the Roman Empire. Numbers of them were in Epheſus, where they had a ſynagogue. When Paul preached the goſpel in this city, many of the Jews, as well as Greeks, received it, and both united in one church. One deſign of this epiſtle is, to guard them againſt any diſunion, which might ariſe between them, on account of former differences of nation and religion. The Apoſtle tells them, that one purpoſe for which God had made known the myſtery of his will was, that, in the diſpenſation of the fulneſs of times, he might gather all things together in one body in Chriſt. In the 11th verſe, ſpeaking to the *Jews*, he ſays, *We have obtained an inheritance in Chriſt, that we ſhould be to the praiſe of God's glory, who firſt truſted in Chriſt.* In our text, ſpeaking to the *Gentile* believers, he

ſays, *In him ye alſo truſted after ye heard the word of truth.* The Jews firſt truſted in Chriſt, for to them the goſpel was firſt ſent. But the Greeks in Epheſus diſcovered a diſpoſition no leſs honeſt and commendable; for, when they heard the word of ſalvation, they alſo believed; and, having believed, they were ſealed with the holy Spirit of promiſe.

There are three things obſervable in theſe words:

I. The object of the faith of theſe Epheſians. *The word of truth and the goſpel of ſalvation.*

II. The forwardneſs, and yet the reaſonableneſs of their faith. *They truſted in Chriſt after they heard the word.*

III. The happy conſequence of their faith. *After they believed, they were ſealed with the holy Spirit,* &c.

I. The goſpel, which the Epheſians believed, is called, *the word of truth, and the goſpel of ſalvation.*

It is the *word of truth.* It contains all that truth which concerns our preſent duty and our future glory. It declares the whole counſel of God, relating to the recovery of our fallen race. Chriſt himſelf came to bear witneſs to the truth, that all men by him might believe; and the Apoſtles were ſent forth to make a more full diſcovery of all things, which Jeſus began to do and to teach.

The goſpel comes attended with demonſtrations of its own divinity: In this ſenſe it is the word of truth. When Paul taught in Epheſus, "he perſuaded the things concerning the kingdom of God." And "by his hands God wrought ſpecial miracles" for the confirmation of the doctrine which he preached. The ſpiritual nature, benevolent deſign and holy tendency of the goſpel; the miracles which attended its firſt publication; its ſupport and propagation in the world againſt all the attempts made to deſtroy it; the accompliſhment, which in every age has been made, and ſtill is mak-

ing, of the propheſies contained in it, are undeniable evidences of its heavenly original.

It is called *the goſpel of our ſalvation.* The deſign of it is to bring ſalvation to our guilty race. It diſcovers to us our ruined, helpleſs condition; the mercy of God to give us ſalvation; the way in which it is procured for us; the terms on which we may become intereſted in it; the evidences by which our title to it muſt be aſcertained; and the glory and happineſs which it comprehends.

II. The ſecond thing obſervable in the text is the commendable diſpoſition, which theſe Epheſians diſcovered, when the goſpel was preached to them. *They truſted in Chriſt, after they heard the word of truth.* They acted as honeſt and rational men: They did not truſt before they heard it, nor refuſe to truſt after they heard it. They did not take the goſpel upon the credit of other men, without examination; nor did they reject it, when they had an opportunity to examine it for themſelves.

While Paul preached in the city, Jews and Greeks came and heard the word. The miracles which he wrought in healing diſeaſes and caſting out evil ſpirits, gave ſuch full demonſtration of a divine power attending him, that, though divers were hardened, many believed, and the name of the Lord Jeſus was magnified. The example of the believers at Epheſus teaches us, in what manner we ſhould hear the word. While we guard againſt a blind credulity, which receives for truth whatever is agreeable to our humor, or is recommended by popular opinion; we muſt be careful not to fall into an obſtinacy and perverſeneſs, which believes nothing, unleſs it agrees with our preconceived notions, or favors our worldly intereſt.—The Epheſians did not believe the goſpel, becauſe ſome others believed it, nor did they reject it, becauſe divers were hardened and ſpake againſt it;

but they judged for themſelves. They heard as they had opportunity, attended to the evidence ſet before them, and, after they had heard, they believed. Their faith ſtood not in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. I proceed,

III. To conſider the happy conſequence of their faith in Chriſt. *In whom, after ye believed, ye were ſealed with that holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion.*

The ſubjects of this *ſealing* are *believers*. *After ye believed*, ye were ſealed. The ſealing here ſpoken of is not a common effect of the goſpel on all who hear it, but a ſpecial conſequence of it to thoſe who receive it.

This ſealing is a work of the Spirit, as a Spirit of *holineſs*, *promiſed* to believers. Ye were ſealed with the holy Spirit of *promiſe*. It muſt therefore be ſome *holy* effect produced in the hearts of Chriſtians by the Spirit operating with the word of truth; and ſuch an effect as correſponds with that holy deſign, for which the Spirit was promiſed. The Spirit promiſed to believers dwells in them, as "a Spirit of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind. The fruit of the Spirit is all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs, and truth."

The Spirit, in conſequence of this ſealing, is to believers *an earneſt of their inheritance, till the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion*—till the redemption of the body from the grave to a ſtate of immortality.

So that the general ſenſe of the words is, that the Epheſian believers, in conſequence of their faith, became partakers of ſuch a divine influence, as ſanctified them to a meetneſs for heaven, and thus evidenced their title to it.

We will diſtinctly attend to theſe two metaphors, the *ſealing*, and the *earneſt* of the Spirit.

1. The *ſealing* of the Spirit. The ſame metaphor is again uſed, chapter iv. 30. *Grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are* ſealed *to the day of redemption.* And 2 Cor. i. 22. *He who hath anointed us is God, who hath alſo* ſealed *us*——.

Sealing literally ſignifies the impreſſion of the image or likeneſs of one thing upon another. Job ſpeaks of "the *clay* as turned to *the ſeal.*" A ſeal impreſſed on wax leaves there its own image. *Inſtruction* is ſaid to be *ſealed*, when it is ſo impreſſed on the heart, as to have an abiding influence. So the ſealing of believers, is their receiving on their hearts the divine image and character, by the ſanctifying power of the holy Spirit. The word of truth is here conſidered, as the *ſeal*; the believing heart, as the ſubject; the holy Spirit, as the agent or ſealer; and the effect produced, as a divine likeneſs. True Chriſtians, by the ſanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, are transformed into the image of God, aſſimilated to the precepts of the goſpel, and wrought into that temper which is the fruit of the Spirit. Accordingly, they who know the truth as it is in Jeſus, are ſaid "to have put off the old man—to be renewed in the ſpirit of their mind—to be created after the image of God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs—to be made partakers of a divine nature—and, beholding the glory of the Lord, to be changed into the ſame image."

By a like metaphor, Chriſtians are repreſented as caſt *in the mould* of the goſpel. The Apoſtle ſays to the Romans, "Ye were the ſervants of ſin, but ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered to you." Or as it is in the margin, "Ye have obeyed that form of doctrine, into which ye were delivered." It is a metaphor taken from caſting metals into a mould. Ye are in your hearts conformed to that type, or mould, into which ye have been caſt. The hearts of believers correſpond with the word of truth, as met-

als take the figure of the mould into which they are received, and as wax bears the image of the ſeal impreſſed upon it.

The ſame idea is conveyed by the metaphor of *writing the word on the heart.* The Apoſtle ſays to the Corinthians, "Ye are the epiſtle of Chriſt miniſtered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of ſtone, but in the fleſhly tables of the heart." And on this account he calls them "the *ſeal* of his Apoſtleſhip in the Lord."

If then your hearts are transformed into the temper of the goſpel—if you are governed by the doctrines and ſubjected to the precepts of it—if you poſſeſs thoſe holy diſpoſitions which are the fruits of the Spirit, you are *ſealed* by the holy Spirit of promiſe.

This work of ſanctification is called *ſealing*, becauſe it conſiſts in a correſpondence between the temper of the ſoul, and the word of truth; as ſealing implies a correſpondence between the image on the ſeal, and the impreſſion left on the wax: And it is aſcribed to the Spirit, becauſe it is by his gracious influence, that the word is made effectual to ſanctify the ſoul. Having illuſtrated the *ſealing*, we proceed,

2. To conſider the *earneſt* of the Spirit.

The Spirit, having ſealed believers, or ſanctified them after God's image, becomes an *earneſt* of their inheritance. The ſame ſentiment often occurs in Paul's writings. He ſays to the Corinthians, "God hath anointed us, and ſealed us, and given *the earneſt of the Spirit* in our hearts.——He who hath wrought us to this thing," the deſire of immortality, "is God, who hath alſo given us *the earneſt of the Spirit*; we are confident therefore and willing to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord." What he here calls the *earneſt*, he, in the 8th chapter to Romans, calls the *firſt*

fruits of the Spirit. "We, who have the *firſt fruits* of the Spirit, groan within ourſelves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

It appears from theſe paſſages, that the *earneſt*, and the *firſt fruits* of the Spirit, are ſome kind of evidence, which the Spirit gives believers, of their title to a happy immortality. The *firſt fruits* were pledges of the enſuing harveſt: *Earneſt* money in a contract, is a pledge of the fulfilment of it. So the graces and comforts of religion, are to Chriſtians, the anticipations and foretaſtes of the happineſs, which awaits them in heaven.

(1.) The virtues of the Chriſtian temper, which are called the fruits of the Spirit, are to believers an earneſt of their inheritance, becauſe they are, in part, a *fulfilment* of the *promiſe*, which *conveys* the inheritance. They receive the promiſe of the Spirit, as well as of eternal life, through faith. "Aſk and ye ſhall receive," ſays our Lord; "ſeek and ye ſhall find—for your heavenly Father giveth the holy Spirit to them who aſk him." Now if you ſenſibly experience the benefit of communion with God; if you find, that by attendance upon him in prayer, hearing the word and other ordinances, your faith is enlivened, your worldly affections ſubdued, your zeal in duty warmed, and your virtuous reſolutions ſtrengthened, then you ſee that promiſe fulfilled, which inſures to you the benefit of attending on theſe means; and God's performance of this promiſe is an earneſt, that he will do all that he has ſpoken, and will withhold no good thing which he has promiſed.

(2.) The graces of the Spirit are an earneſt of the inheritance, as they are *preparatives* for it. If you educate a ſon for a particular employment, this is to him an earneſt and token of your intention to put him into that employment: So God's granting you his Spirit to ſanctify and prepare you for glory, is a pledge of his gracious purpoſe of bringing

you to glory. His making you mete to be partakers of the inheritance, is an earneſt that he will in due time put you in poſſeſſion of it. But,

(3.) The *ſealing* and ſanctifying influence of the Spirit is eſpecially called an earneſt of the inheritance, becauſe it is a *part* of the inheritance *given beforehand.*

In the religious life there are ſome ſenſible pleaſures, which the Chriſtian conſiders as earneſt of the ſuperior pleaſures reſerved for him in the heavenly ſtate. "Wiſdom's ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace."—"Great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing ſhall offend them."

Thoſe tempers in which religion conſiſts, ſuch as love and devotion toward God, benevolence and good will to our fellow creatures, gratitude to benefactors and ſubmiſſion to the divine government, are pleaſant and delightful. "The good man is ſatisfied from himſelf." And from his preſent experience he juſtly concludes, that when theſe tempers ſhall be wrought to their perfection in the future world, his joy will be full. There he ſhall know God as he is, and love him with enlarged and lively powers. There his benevolence, purged from every degree of malice and envy, will riſe to its proper height, and ſpread unconfined. There the wonders of Providence and of grace, unfolded to his view, will awaken new ſentiments of gratitude and admiration. A great part of his preſent unhappineſs proceeds from the irregularity of his temper—from unruly paſſions—inordinate affections—and the working of ſin in his members. Hence he knows, that when his preſent diſorders are rectified, and the principles of holineſs are perfected, the pleaſures of religion will be pure, and no ſorrow will be mingled with them.

While he rejoices in the teſtimony of his conſcience, which daily witneſſes to his godly ſincerity,

he thinks how his joy will be heightened, when love ſhall be made perfect, and his heart ſhall no more reproach him.

While he experiences the pleaſures of that hope, which enters within the vail, he infers, how vaſtly theſe pleaſures muſt be improved, when he ſhall enter within the vail himſelf, and enjoy what hope now anticipates. The ſatisfaction, which attends his hours of fervent devotion, is an earneſt of the unſpeakably greater delight, which he will find in the devotions of heaven, where this ſinful fleſh will no more obſtruct, nor wordly cares divert his ſpiritual exerciſes.

Thus the believer has in himſelf, an earneſt of the inheritance which is reſerved for him, and an evidence of the divine original of the religion which he has received. The Apoſtle John ſays, "He who believeth on the Son, hath the witneſs in himſelf.

The Spirit is the earneſt of our inheritance, *until the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion.* When we actually poſſeſs the inheritance, the earneſt will no longer be needed. An earneſt ſuppoſes the object to be unpoſſeſſed: This, enjoyed in its fulneſs, ſuperſedes the earneſt. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part will be done away.—We, who have the firſt fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourſelves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body; for we are ſaved by hope; but hope that is ſeen is not hope, for what a man ſeeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we ſee not, then do we with patience wait; and the Spirit alſo helpeth our infirmities, and maketh interceſſion for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

REFLECTIONS.

1. Our ſubject teaches us, that all the operations of the divine Spirit on the minds of men, are of a holy nature and tendency.

The Spirit of promiſe, which works in believers, is called the *holy* and *good* Spirit, in diſtinction from the Spirit which works in the children of diſobedience, and which is called an *evil* and *unclean* Spirit. If the Spirit is holy, we may conclude, that all his operations tend to holineſs, and that the works which he produces are of a holy nature. By this mark we are to judge, whether we are led by the Spirit of God. "They who are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit. If we walk in the Spirit, we ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh."—"They who are ſenſual have not the Spirit." The fruits of the Spirit, and the works of the fleſh, ſtand oppoſed to each other. We are never to aſcribe to the divine Spirit, any thing but what is agreeable to the divine character. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt and inticed."——"Do not err, my beloved brethren; every *good gift* and every *perfect gift*, cometh down from above, from the Father of lights." Good, we are to aſcribe to him; but not evil, *moral* evil. This is contrary to his nature, and therefore is never the effect of his operation and influence. He is always the ſame holy Being. "With him is no variableneſs, or ſhadow of turning."

If we would know by what Spirit we are guided, we muſt compare his operations with the precepts of the goſpel. By the goſpel we are called to meekneſs, humility, peaceableneſs, charity, ſobriety, contentment, truth and righteouſneſs: And theſe are the fruits of the Spirit. Now if we find, that the

Spirit which is in us operates to paſſion, pride, contention, ſelfconfidence, uncharitableneſs and contempt of others, we may certainly conclude, that it is not the Spirit of God.

By this rule we are to judge of all impreſſions, excitations and impulſes, which at any time we feel. If we find ourſelves ſtrongly impelled to a particular action, we are not at once to conclude, that the impulſe is divine, and thence infer that the action is our duty. We are firſt to examine, whether the action itſelf is holy and virtuous; and we are to conclude the inward motion prompting us to it, to be from above, or from beneath, according as the conduct in queſtion appears to agree, or diſagree with the word of God. We are not to make our own feelings the ſtandard of right and wrong, but to try our feelings by the ſober ſentiments of reaſon, and the ſure dictates of divine revelation.

2. Our ſubject ſtrongly encourages humble ſouls to apply to God for the needful influences of his grace.

The Spirit of God is called *the holy Spirit of promiſe*. It is one of thoſe bleſſings, which God has *promiſed* to the church. It was promiſed under the Old Teſtament; but more fully under the goſpel. This is a miniſtration of the Spirit. Where God ſends his goſpel, he gives the Spirit to accompany it; and "the Spirit is received in the hearing of faith."——"The Spirit is ſhed forth abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt, that being juſtified by faith we may be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."—"Aſk and ye ſhall receive," ſays our Lord—"for your heavenly Father will give the holy Spirit to them who aſk him." On the foot of this promiſe, believers may come boldly to God's throne; and even ſinners under an awakening ſenſe of their guilt and impotence, may come with humble hope to obtain his grace. This is the voice of

divine wiſdom, "How long, ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity, and ye ſcorners, delight in ſcorning? Turn ye at my reproof: Behold, I will pour out my ſpirit unto you: I will make known my words unto you." If God has already given them his Spirit to convince them of ſin, they may thence collect hope, that he will grant his Spirit to carry their conviction into effect. "Whoſoever hath," or improveth what he hath, "to him ſhall be given." Let none imagine, that the prayers, the reformations and endeavors of awakened ſinners, are abomination to God; for he who hath wrought them to theſe things is God, who hath given them the convincing and awakening influences of his Spirit. And the work of his Spirit—the fruit of his operation on the hearts of men, is not abomination. To call it by this name is not to aſcribe righteouſneſs, but wickedneſs to our Maker.

3. It appears, that we can have no concluſive evidence of a title to heaven, without the experience of a holy temper.

The *ſealing* of the Spirit is the work of ſanctification in the ſoul. It is the impreſſion of the divine image on the inward man. None therefore are ſealed to the day of redemption, but thoſe who are partakers of a divine nature. Whatever inward perſuaſions we may feel, that the heavenly inheritance is ours, if we have not within us a holy principle governing our hearts and lives, we are not mete to be partakers of the inheritance, and can ſhew no ſeal of our title to it. The ſeal of the Spirit is that holineſs, which prepares for heaven; and this only is the ſure evidence of our claim to it. This ſealing is not an inward ſuggeſtion or revelation made to the mind, but it is a holy change wrought in the mind. If we are renewed after the image of God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs, we have the firſt fruits of the Spirit, and may wait in hope for the day of redemption.

4. We ſee that Chriſtians are under indiſpenſible obligations to univerſal holineſs.

Every ſin is an injury and diſhonor to God; but the ſins of believers are, in a peculiar ſenſe, a grief to the Spirit of God, who has ſanctified and ſealed them. The Apoſtle therefore improves this ſealing as an argument againſt wickedneſs of every kind in the profeſſors of the goſpel. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, and grieve not the holy Spirit of God. Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and clamor, and evil ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind one to another."—"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you; if any man defile this temple, him will God deſtroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

If God has given his Spirit to ſeal you, grieve not this Spirit. If ye run into the allowed practice of ſin, or continue impenitent in any iniquity, into which ye have fallen, the Spirit is not then the earneſt of your inheritance. You blot and obſcure his ſeal on your hearts. And the pollutions with which you have darkened and deformed it, muſt be waſhed off by the tears of repentance, before you can there read your title to the inheritance. You muſt keep your ſeal fair and bright by the conſtant exerciſe of faith, and practice of duty. You muſt preſerve your hope by purifying your ſouls.—"Know ye not, brethren, that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghoſt, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? Therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your ſpirits, which are God's.

SERMON VIII.

EPHESIANS i. 15——20.

Wherefore I alſo, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jeſus, and love unto all the ſaints, ceaſe not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the father of glory, may give unto you the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened: that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints, and what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to uſward who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead——.

IN the foregoing verſes, the Apoſtle ſpeaks of the Epheſian believers, as being "ſealed with that holy ſpirit of promiſe, which was the earneſt of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchaſed poſſeſſion. In the words now read, he mentions two graces, which were eminent marks and characters in that holy ſeal, which had been impreſſed upon them. Theſe were, "*Faith* in the Lord Jeſus, and, *Love* to all the ſaints," which are ever to be conſidered as diſtinguiſhing ſignatures of

the heirs of heaven, and ſeals of their title to the purchaſed poſſeſſion.

The Apoſtle gives thanks to God for their faith and love, of which he had lately heard, and ſome effects of which he had formerly ſeen, while he reſided among them.

As there were many from all parts of Aſia, who attended on his miniſtry, when he preached in Epheſus, it is not ſuppoſable, that he could be perſonally acquainted with them all; he therefore ſpeaks of their faith and love, as having been reported to him. Beſides: He had now for ſome time been abſent from them; and he foretold, that after his departure, there would be a great defection from the faith, which accordingly happened, as we learn from his epiſtles to Timothy: And he probably intends here to expreſs his joy concerning thoſe, of whom he had heard, that in theſe times of dangerous declenſion they remained ſtedfaſt in the faith. He did not, however, think them ſo firmly eſtabliſhed, as to be ſecure in that evil day from all the power of temptation; he therefore *prays*, as well as *gives thanks*, in their behalf.

What he requeſted was, in general, that they might have greater knowledge and clearer diſcernment in divine things; and, particularly, that they might know the exalted hope to which they were called; the glorious inheritance which was provided for them; and the greatneſs of that power which will work in believers, to raiſe them unto immortal life, as it had already wrought in raiſing Chriſt from the dead, and ſetting him at God's right hand in heavenly places.

I. Let us conſider the things for which the Apoſtle commends the Epheſians: Theſe are *faith* in Chriſt, and *love* to all the ſaints.

Faith is ſuch a ſenſible, realizing belief of the goſpel, in its general truth, and in its particular doctrines and precepts, as gives it a practical in-

fluence on the heart and life. It "receives *the love* of the truth"—"receives it as the word of God, which effectually works in them, who believe."

Evangelical faith has a particular reſpect to Jeſus Chriſt, as the great author of the goſpel, and as the purchaſer of that ſalvation which it reveals. God has ſpoken to us by his Son: Faith receives him as a teacher ſent from God, and embraces as truth, whatever is taught by him. Jeſus is the mediator, through whom God ſhews mercy to guilty men. Faith, therefore, looks up to God through him. "We by Chriſt believe in God, who raiſed him from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God."

True faith is "made perfect by works." The Apoſtle commends the Theſſalonians for the works of faith, which accompanied their good profeſſion. The chriſtian ſcheme is ſo vaſtly important, that one who believes it with the heart, and views it as it is, cannot feel indifferent to it, nor live uninfluenced by it. The Apoſtle ſays of the Epheſian believers, "He had *heard* of their faith." Its fruits were ſo conſpicuous, that it was ſpoken of at a diſtance. They had not only profeſſed their faith, but ſtedfaſtly maintained it in times of great corruption and defection. They had attended on the ordinances of Chriſt in his church. They had walked in humble obedience to his laws, and in peace and charity with one another; and thus had ſhewed their faith by their works. Real faith has ſuch a commanding influence in the ſoul, that "it caſts down imaginations and every high thing, which exalts itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt."

The faith of the Epheſians toward Chriſt, was accompanied with "love to all the ſaints." Where the work of faith is, there will be the labor of love; and where faith grows among Chriſtians, their

charity toward each other will abound. The goſpel exhibits the moſt engaging examples of love in the character of the great God, and in the life of Jeſus Chriſt; and it propoſes the moſt powerful motives to benificence in all its doctrines and diſcoveries. Faith, viewing and applying the examples and doctrines of the goſpel, purifies the ſoul unto unfeigned love of the brethren." "The end of the commandment, is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned."

The goſpel requires us to love *all* men, ſinners, as well as ſaints; enemies, as well as friends. The love which we owe to mankind in common, is *benevolence* or *good-will*. This conſiſts in a deſire of their happineſs, and a diſpoſition to promote it. But, beſides this, there is another kind of love, which we owe to the *ſaints*, or thoſe who *appear* to be ſuch. This conſiſts in an *approbation* and *eſteem* of their character. This is the ſame kind of love, as that which we owe to the Deity. So St. John teaches us: "If a man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath ſeen, how ſhall he love God, whom he hath not ſeen? Every one that loveth him who begat, loveth him alſo that is begotten of him. By this we know, that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments."

Love to God is an approbation of, and pleaſedneſs with his moral character—his holineſs, juſtice, truth, goodneſs and mercy. It ſuppoſes a conformity to this character, and it implies a deſire of becoming more and more aſſimilated to it. The ſaints are "partakers of a divine nature:" They are "renewed after the image of God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs." If, therefore, we love God for his moral perfections, we ſhall love the ſaints, as far as they appear to have theſe di-

vine qualities wrought into their temper. It is absurd to pretend, that we love the character of God, as long as we disregard this character in our fellow men.

But though love to God, and love to the saints, are the same in their general nature, yet, as they respect different objects, they must be diverse in many of their operations. As God is an all perfect Being, love to him will express itself by an intire submission to his will—by a choice of him for our portion—by a preference of his favor to every worldly interest—by a full complacence in him as our chief happiness—and by a humble acquiescence in all his dispensations and commands. As the saints are but dependent creatures, and as they are holy in a very imperfect measure, they cannot be the objects of these high operations of love.—God only we are to love with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. The saints we are to love with a pure heart fervently, but not with all the heart supremely. Our love to them we must express by choosing them for our companions—by delighting in their virtuous example and heavenly conversation—by cheerfully assisting them in their spiritual interests, and meekly accepting their assistance in ours—by studying the things which make for peace and edification—by communing with them in instituted ordinances—by bearing their infirmities—by condescending to them in cases of difference—and by seeking their profit, as well as our own, that both they and we may be saved.

These Ephesians manifested their love to *all* saints. Their charity was not confined to a party—to those who lived in the same city, and worshipped in the same sanctuary; but it embraced all, who in every place called on the name of Jesus Christ their common Lord.

If our love consists in an attachment to a particular sect, with which we are connected in senti-

ment, intereſt, or worldly deſign, it has nothing of the nature of Chriſtian love. The love which regards the ſaints for their holy character, will regard *all* in whom this character appears, wherever they dwell, and whatever name they bear. To judge then, whether our love is ſincere, we muſt conſider its extent, as well as its effects.

II. Paul expreſſes his great *thankfulneſs* to God for the happy ſucceſs of the goſpel among theſe Epheſians. "After I heard of your faith and love, I ceaſe not to give thanks."

He rejoiced in the honor which redounded to the crucified Jeſus, who, having made his ſoul an offering for ſin, now ſaw his ſeed increaſing, and the pleaſure of the Lord proſpering in his hands. He rejoiced to think, how many immortal ſouls were now reſcued from the power of Satan, delivered from guilt and condemnation, and brought into a ſtate of pardon and ſafety. He rejoiced in the happy conſequences, which might enſue to others from the glorious ſucceſs of the goſpel in Epheſus. He hoped, that from hence the word of God might ſound forth to all around, and that the knowledge of the truth might be tranſmitted to ſucceeding ages. Here were many pious families, in which religion was maintained, and children trained up in the admonition of the Lord. The bleſſed effects of Paul's preaching here might hopefully reach to multitudes around, and deſcend to generations yet unborn. He rejoiced the more in their faith and love, becauſe theſe were the effects of *his own* preaching. The good miniſter is pleaſed to hear of the ſucceſs of the goſpel in any place; but he feels a peculiar pleaſure in ſeeing the ſucceſs of his own miniſtry. Paul had an uncommon affection for thoſe whom he had begotten by the goſpel, and he conceived a ſpecial joy in the proſpect of meeting them in heaven. He ſays to the Theſſalonians— "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?

—Are not even ye in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt at his coming? Ye are our glory and our joy."

If the prevalence of religion is, on ſo many accounts, matter of thankfulneſs, we ſhould ſpare no pains to give it ſucceſs. Not only miniſters, but all Chriſtians ſhould labor in this glorious cauſe. We ſhould all be ſolicitous to experience the power of religion in our own ſouls, and to promote it among others, as far as our influence can extend.—Miniſters ſhould labor abundantly in the work to which they are called, becauſe it is a work, which concerns the honor of Chriſt's kingdom, and the ſalvation of men's ſouls. Profeſſors of religion ſhould ſo walk, that others may, by their example, be encouraged to walk with them in the way to glory. They and miniſters ſhould ſtrive together in their labors and prayers, for the advancement of the common cauſe. Heads of families by their prayers, inſtructions and example ſhould ſupport religion in their houſes, and unite their influence for the general maintenance of family government and order. The happy change, which religion makes in the hearts where it is received, and among the people where it prevails, will be a powerful motive with the benevolent Chriſtian, whether in a public or private ſtation, to contribute his influence for its ſucceſs.

III. The Apoſtle, not only gives thanks for the paſt, but prays for the future ſucceſs of the goſpel in Epheſus. "I ceaſe not to give thanks, making mention of you in my prayers." Though he had heard much of their faith and love, he did not conſider them, and would not have them conſider themſelves, as already made perfect; he therefore informs them, that he prayed for them, and thus admoniſhes them to pray for themſelves, that their faith and love might ſtill more abound.

The beſt Chriſtians have need to make continual improvements. The Apoſtle exhorts as many as are perfect, to be likeminded with him, who "preſſed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." The greater progreſs Chriſtians make in knowledge and grace, the more humble they will be under a ſenſe of their deficiency, and the more ſolicitous to make advances in both. There cannot be a more unfavorable ſign, than great confidence in our own attainments. "If we ſay, we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us."—"He who thinks, he knows any thing," and glories in his ſuppoſed knowledge, "knows nothing yet as he ought to know." Let us be careful to know ourſelves, that "we may not think of ourſelves above that which we ought to think, but may think ſoberly."

The Apoſtle "made mention of the Epheſians in his prayers." He directs, that "interceſſions and giving of thanks be made for all men." He was no leſs conſtant in his prayers, than in his labors, for the ſpiritual intereſt of mankind. He knew, that the ſucceſs of all his labors depended on God's bleſſing; he, therefore, added to them his fervent prayers.

If miniſters ought to labor and pray for the ſalvation of others, ſurely you all ought to do much for your own. The labors of a miniſter will do you little good, if you are inattentive to your own condition. What will *his* preaching do for you, if *you* will not hear or apply it? Will *his* prayers ſave you, while *you* caſt off fear and reſtrain prayer? When miniſters and people ſtrive together in their prayers, there is reaſon to hope for God's bleſſing on both. We proceed to obſerve,

IV. The Apoſtle prayed for the Epheſians, "that God would give them the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the acknowledgment of Chriſt; and

would grant, that the eyes of their underſtanding might be opened."

They had already known the revelation of the myſtery of God's will: The eyes of their underſtanding had already been enlightened to ſee and acknowledge the truth of the goſpel. But ſtill the Apoſtle prays, "that God would give them the ſpirit of wiſdom, and intellectual eyes well enlightened." Thus alſo he prays for the Coloſſians—"that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding—and might be fruitful in every good work, increaſing in the knowledge of God."

His aim, in all his preaching and writing, was to promote ſpiritual knowledge, and thus to advance real godlineſs. He conſidered religion as a reaſonable ſervice, and he would have men believe it on competent evidence, underſtand its nature, feel its importance, and obey it on ſuitable motives. His ſermons, like his epiſtles, were full of inſtruction. His deſign was, not to amuſe the fancy of his hearers, but to "open their eyes, and turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God."—"He did not handle the word of God deceitfully," or confuſedly; "but uſed great plainneſs of ſpeech, and by manifeſtation of the truth commended himſelf to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God."

His prayers correſponded with his labors. By telling the Epheſians, what were his prayers for them, he inſtructs them, what ſhould be *their* chief deſires for themſelves;—he teaches them, that they ought to ſeek "the ſpirit of wiſdom and revelation in the acknowledgment of Chriſt;" or wiſdom from God to underſtand the revelation, which he had given them, and which they had acknowledged; and ſuch an illumination of their minds as to diſcern the nature and perceive the excellence of the things contained in this revelation.

Chriſtians muſt not content themſelves with their preſent knowledge, but aſpire to "all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding, and to the knowledge of the myſtery of God, and of Chriſt, in whom are hidden all the treaſures of wiſdom." For this end, they muſt converſe with the holy ſcriptures—attend on the inſtituted miniſtrations of the word—compare ſpiritual things with ſpiritual, and compare themſelves with the ſpiritual things, which they have learned—guard againſt prejudices, eſpecially againſt ſpiritual pride and ſelfconfidence—keep their minds open to conviction, and apply all their knowledge to practical uſes.

V. We will conſider the ſeveral things, which the Apoſtle prayed, that the Epheſians might underſtand. Theſe are "the hope of the calling, the glory of the inheritance, and the power of God toward them who believe."

1. He prays, that they might know, "what is the hope of the divine calling;" or the hope to which God had called them.

He ſays, elſewhere, "God hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpoſe and grace." And he exhorts us to "walk worthy of him, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory." The goſpel calls us to holineſs, as a neceſſary preparative for glory; and to newneſs of heart and life, as an indiſpenſible qualification for admiſſion into the kingdom of God. They in whom this call is by divine grace made effectual, "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs." Being thus renewed in the temper of their minds—"they walk in newneſs of life." To "walk worthy of God unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work," is to "walk worthy of him, who hath called us to his kingdom."

This calling is accompanied with *hope.* The external call of the goſpel is attended with a *general* hope of the heavenly kingdom, as what is *attainable.* Where the call becomes effectual to the renovation of the heart and life, there is a *ſpecial* hope of the kingdom, as what is already attained. When we find the power of the goſpel operating in our ſouls to real holineſs, we may then apply to ourſelves its great and precious promiſes.

It is of great importance that we *know* the hope of this calling—that we underſtand the *way* in which we are called to God's kingdom, the *terms* on which we may enter into it, and the *evidence* by which we may aſcertain our title to it. We ſhould be watchful, that we do not miſconceive of the conditions of ſalvation, or miſtake our own character, and ſo imagine ourſelves to be heirs of the kingdom of glory, while we remain in the kingdom of darkneſs. We ſhould always bear in mind, that God has called us with an *holy* calling—has choſen us to be *holy* and *without blame*—has appointed us to ſalvation through ſanctification of the Spirit, and that none are entitled to the heavenly inheritance, but thoſe who, by the renewing of their minds, are made mete to be partakers of it. We, are therefore, to hope for it only in a way of holineſs; and the proper influence of this hope, is to purify our ſouls as Chriſt is pure.

2. The Apoſtle prays, that they may know—"what is the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the ſaints;" or, what a rich and glorious inheritance God has prepared for, and promiſed to them.

This is what none can fully comprehend. We may, however, by revelation know ſo much of it, as to be well aſſured, that it is rich and glorious. It is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, fading not away, reſerved in heaven for the faithful."

It is GOD's inheritance; that which he has pro-

vided and reſerved for his own children; and he gives liberally:—It is a *purchaſed* poſſeſſion; and the purchaſe was not made with corruptible things, ſuch as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jeſus the Son of God:—It is an inheritance for the *ſaints;* for them whom God hath choſen to be holy, and predeſtinated to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt, and whom he hath ſanctified by his Spirit, and ſealed unto the day of redemption:—It is an inheritance beſtowed by God's *abundant* love; and as it comes from the riches of the glory of his grace, the gift itſelf muſt be rich and glorious. Though we cannot comprehend its dimenſions, nor compute its value, yet when we conſider the grace of the Being who conveys it, the riches of the price which bought it, and the divine preparation by which the heirs are formed to enjoy it, we muſt conceive it to be unſpeakably glorious.—Many important properties of this inheritance the ſcripture enumerates; and finally ſums up all in theſe comprehenſive words, "He that overcometh ſhall inherit ALL THINGS."

Laſtly: The Apoſtle deſires, that Chriſtians may know, "what is the exceeding greatneſs of God's power toward them that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead."

When the Chriſtian contemplates the glorious inheritance, which awaits him in the heavenly world, the joy which begins to kindle in his ſoul, is ſometimes damped by the thought of that gloomy valley which lies in the way. Death and the grave are before him;—the body muſt be diſſolved—muſt moulder away under the clods of the earth, and be reduced to its primitive duſt;—and this ſoul—this conſcious, thinking mind, which has never yet exiſted without a body;—Where, and what will it be? It can have little conception of a ſeparate, unbodied ſtate; for this is wholly unexperienced.

How dark the prospect!—But this gloomy scene the gospel has enlightened;—it reveals to us a resurrection of the body, and a happy reunion of it to the soul; in which new state we shall exist for ever. To strengthen our faith it refers us to the work of God's mighty power in raising Christ from the dead; and, from this glorious instance leads us to conceive the exceeding greatness of his power in raising from the dead them who believe in Jesus, and in transforming these vile bodies to such a spiritual and immortal state, that they shall be forever capable of enjoying the heavenly inheritance. Of this power, the believer has already had some experience in the quickening of his soul, once dead in trespasses and in sins, to a holy and divine life.

If we have been quickened with Christ to a spiritual life, we shall also be raised with him to eternal life, and be made to sit with him in heavenly places. If we are dead to this world, our life is hidden in another—hidden with Christ in God; and when Christ shall appear we also shall appear with him in glory. "If the Spirit of him, who raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in us, he that raised up Jesus, shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit which dwelleth in us. Therefore "let us not walk after the flesh, but through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, that we may live." If we expect to rise with Christ, "let us now seek the things which are above, where Christ is."—"let us have our conversation in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body, according to that mighty working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

vided and reſerved for his own children; and he gives liberally:—It is a *purchaſed* poſſeſſion; and the purchaſe was not made with corruptible things, ſuch as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jeſus the Son of God:—It is an inheritance for the *ſaints;* for them whom God hath choſen to be holy, and predeſtinated to the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt, and whom he hath ſanctified by his Spirit, and ſealed unto the day of redemption:—It is an inheritance beſtowed by God's *abundant* love; and as it comes from the riches of the glory of his grace, the gift itſelf muſt be rich and glorious. Though we cannot comprehend its dimenſions, nor compute its value, yet when we conſider the grace of the Being who conveys it, the riches of the price which bought it, and the divine preparation by which the heirs are formed to enjoy it, we muſt conceive it to be unſpeakably glorious.—Many important properties of this inheritance the ſcripture enumerates; and finally ſums up all in theſe comprehenſive words, "He that overcometh ſhall inherit ALL THINGS."

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SERMON IX.

EPHESIANS i. 19——23.

According to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulneſs of him that filleth all in all.

IN the preceding words, Saint Paul prays for the Epheſian believers, that, in the acknowledgment of the goſpel of Chriſt, they might have the ſpirit of wiſdom to underſtand the revelation given them of the preaching of the Apoſtles; and that their intellectual eyes might be enlightened to know the ground and the terms of that hope to which they were called, the glorious riches of that inheritance which was provided for them, and the exceeding greatneſs of that power, which, by raiſing them from the dead, ſhould put them in poſſeſſion of the heavenly inheritance. To ſtrengthen their faith in God's power and promiſe, and to aid their conceptions of the glory of this inheri-

tance ; the Apoſtle refers them to the reſurrection and exaltation of Jeſus Chriſt, and to that dominion and dignity which he now enjoys, as the reward of his ſufferings in the fleſh.

The ſeveral important ſteps of Chriſt's exaltation are contained in the words now read : Theſe are his reſurrection from the dead—his aſcenſion to, and ſeſſion at the right hand of God—his advancement, far above all principality and power, to ſupreme dominion over all things—and the glorious end of his dominion, even the benefit of the church which is his body, the fulneſs of him who filleth all in all.

I. The firſt ſtep of Chriſt's exaltation was his reſurrection from the dead.

The plan which the wiſdom of God laid for the redemption of our fallen race, was the death of Jeſus Chriſt ; who, though a holy and divine perſon, " was made in the likeneſs of our ſinful fleſh, that by a ſacrifice for ſin he might condemn ſin in the fleſh." But the ſcheme of God's wiſdom did not end with the *death* of the Redeemer. If he had remained under the power of death, our hopes muſt have died with him. His reſurrection was neceſſary, that we might have a convincing proof of his divine character and miſſion—of the truth of his goſpel—of God's acceptance of the ſacrifice offered—and of the certainty of our own reſurrection and future exiſtence. God therefore took particular care to render this important event certain and indubitable.

Our divine Lord, during his miniſtry, often foretold his own approaching death and the reſurrection which would ſpeedily follow. He pointed out the exact time of his reſurrection, and referred not only his diſciples, but the unbelieving Jews to this humanly improbable event, as the grand and deciſive proof of his heavenly authority.

appeared on the mount at the transfiguration; and on this cloud he aſcended out of their ſight into the glorious heavens, where, it is ſaid "he ſat down on the right hand of God."

By this phraſe the ſcriptures often expreſs Chriſt's ſtate in the world above. As God is a Spirit, he can have neither right hand nor left. Bodily parts are aſcribed to him figuratively, to denote thoſe qualities, which in us are exerciſed by the means of ſuch corporeal members. As the hand is the chief inſtrument of exerting ſtrength, it is applied to God to ſignify his mighty power. The *right* hand is among men the uſual place of honor and reſpect; and therefore denotes, in our text, ſuperior dignity. *Sitting*, in the caſe before us, intends not any poſture of body, but the things implied in that poſture. The prophet deſcribes a ſtate of peace and ſecurity, by every man's *ſitting* under his own vine. In alluſion to this uſe of the metaphor, Chriſt is ſaid to *ſit* on God's right hand, to ſignify that he has ceaſed from his labors and ſufferings, and entered into a ſtate of repoſe and joy. Sitting alſo denotes *continuance* in the ſame place. Chriſt is therefore ſaid to ſit on God's right hand, to ſignify that the heavens have received him, until the time of the reſtitution or completion of all things. It farther imports *authority and power*; and is hence applied to Chriſt to expreſs his dominion over the natural and moral world.

Chriſt is exalted to the right hand of God, not only as a ruler, but alſo as an *interceſſor*. "He has entered into the holy place to appear in the preſence of God for us." In the character of an advocate, he is deſcribed as being on God's right hand to ſignify his nearneſs to God, and the prevalence of his interceſſion. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died; yea rather, that is riſen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who alſo maketh interceſſion for us." But it is obſerv-

able, that the ſcripture, when it ſpeaks of Chriſt as *interceding*, or *acting* in behalf of believers, deſcribes him, not as *ſitting*, but as *being*, or *ſtanding* on God's right hand, to ſignify his gracious attention to their exigences and wants. Paul ſays, "He *is* at the right hand of God, making interceſſion." When Stephen called on Jeſus to receive his ſpirit, he ſaid, "I ſee the heavens opened, and the Son of man *ſtanding* on the right hand of God." John ſays, "In the midſt of the throne and of the elders, there *ſtood* a Lamb, as it had been ſlain."

So wonderfully the ſcripture condeſcends to our manner of conceiving and ſpeaking, that it may encourage our faith and hope. *Sitting* is a poſture of dignity and repoſe: *Standing* is a poſture of attention and earneſtneſs. Chriſt is exhibited to us in the latter attitude, to ſignify how graciouſly he regards our neceſſities—how readily he affords us help in the time of need—how fervently he intercedes for us, when we draw near to God in his name. And he is ſaid to be on God's right hand, to ſignify his power to grant us whatever our wants require, and his intereſt with the Father to obtain for us an anſwer to our humble requeſts. When faith beholds the divine Savior, in this powerful ſtate, and in this interceding attitude, Will it not encourage us to prayer, animate us to duty, fortify us againſt fear, and comfort us in death? Let us ſeek the things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth on the right hand of God; and ſet our affections on things above, and not on things which are on the earth; for our life is hidden with Chriſt in God.

III. The Apoſtle farther inſtructs us, that "God has ſet Jeſus Chriſt in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet." In like manner he

deſcribes Chriſt's glorified ſtate, in his epiſtle to the Philippians. "Being found in faſhion, as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue ſhould confeſs, that he is Lord to the Glory of God the Father."

It is the doctrine of this Apoſtle, that Jeſus Chriſt is "the image of the inviſible God, the firſt born," i. e. the heir, or the Lord, "of the whole creation; for by him all things were created in heaven and earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; and he is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt." As the divine creator, he is naturally and eſſentially poſſeſſed of ſupreme dominion over all creatures. When he became fleſh and dwelt among men, the Apoſtle ſays, "He made himſelf of no reputation; he took on him the form of a ſervant; he humbled himſelf, and was obedient to the death." In reward of this humiliation and obedience, he is highly exalted above all principality and power, and is made head over all things. Though his eſſential kingdom, is coeternal with himſelf, yet there is a mediatorial kingdom, to which he was exalted in time and in conſequence of his mediatorſhip. This kingdom had a beginning, and will have an end. It commenced with the covenant of grace; it was ſolemnly announced in its full extent, at the time of his aſcenſion; and it will terminate at the final judgment, when he will deliver it up to the Father.

The Apoſtle deſcribes this kingdom, as extending to all creatures in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. All the angels of God worſhip him; they are ſubject to his authority, devoted to his

pleaſure, and employed in his ſervice. The government of the natural world is in his hands; he guides the wheels of Providence; he directs and overrules all events according to the ſcheme of the divine counſel. He is repreſented in the Revelation, as receiving from the right hand of him who ſits on the throne, the book which contains the decrees and purpoſes of Providence, and as breaking the ſeals, and opening the leaves of this book in their ſucceſſive order. When he received the book, the whole conſiſtory of ſaints and angels fell down before him, ſaying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and open the ſeals thereof, for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us unto God with thy blood."

The government of the church is in the hands of Jeſus Chriſt. He has inſtituted laws and ordinances in it, and has appointed officers to adminiſter them. He diſpenſes the influences of the divine Spirit to give power and efficacy to his word. He watches over his church to defend it from enemies. He will one day enlarge its bounds, and render it more glorious, than it has ever yet been, in its extent, its numbers and its purity.

He has dominion over devils. His ſuperiority to them he diſplayed on earth, by expelling them with his word from their ancient poſſeſſions. They fell as lightning from heaven, before the power of his name. "He ſpoiled principalities and powers, and made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them on the croſs." Though he has not perfectly extinguiſhed their influence among men, yet he has greatly diminiſhed it by the light of his goſpel;—and he ſets bounds to their power. He will not ſuffer their malice ſo far to prevail, as to pluck out of his hands any of the ſouls which believe in him; much leſs to ſubvert and deſtroy his church: This he has built upon a rock, and againſt it the gates of hell will never prevail. In the Revelation, St. John deſcribes the conflict between the kingdom of

Chriſt, and the kingdom of Satan, as iſſuing in a complete and final victory of the former over the latter. "There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought againſt the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place any more found in heaven. And the great dragon was caſt out, that old ſerpent called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world, and his angels were caſt out with him."

The laſt and moſt glorious act of Chriſt's ſupreme dominion is the judgment of the world.—"God has committed all judgment to the Son." As Jeſus has gone into heaven; ſo, we are told, he will, in ſome unknown period, come down from heaven in flaming fire, attended with all his mighty angels. He will appear ſitting on the throne of his glory, and before him all nations will be gathered; and every man will be judged according to his works. They who are found approved, will be received into that glorious kingdom, into which nothing can enter that defiles. But unbelievers and hypocrites, the diſobedient and abominable will be caſt into the place of everlaſting puniſhment prepared for the devil and his angels. Then will theſe material heavens paſs away, and the earth with its works will be burnt up; and the great Redeemer, having finiſhed the ſolemn trial, will return to his exalted ſeat in the heavens, attended with his exulting train, who will enter with ſongs of joy and praiſe into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. When Chriſt ſhall have put down all rule, and principality and power, ſhall have deſtroyed the laſt enemy, death, and ſhall have made the final diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments; then ſhall he deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.

In the view and expectation of this ſolemn and tremendous ſcene, let us now humbly ſubmit to the

government of Jeſus Chriſt, and thankfully accept the gracious propoſals of his goſpel. Let us be careful what manner of perſons we are in all holy converſation.—Let us judge ourſelves, that we may not be condemned with the world. This is the divine admonition to the children of men: "Behold, I have ſet my king on my holy hill of Zion —I will give him the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion—He ſhall rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potters veſſel. Be wiſe now, therefore; ſerve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiſs ye the Son, leſt he be angry and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

IV. We proceed to conſider the *end* for which Chriſt exerciſes his high and extenſive dominion. "He is made head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulneſs of him, who filleth all in all."

The church here, as often elſewhere, is called a *body*, to ſignify the harmony and union, which ought to ſubſiſt among its various parts. "The body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, ſo alſo is Chriſt;" or the Chriſtian church. In this body, there ought to be no ſchiſm, no rent or diviſion; but all the members ſhould have the ſame care one for another, as each for itſelf. This thought the Apoſtle reſumes in the 4th chapter of this epiſtle. "Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, for there is one body, and one Spirit."

The church is called the body of *Chriſt*, becauſe he is its head; and all the members, being united to him, take their direction, and draw their ſupport from him; and he exerciſes a continual care and concern for them. He loved the church and

gave himſelf for it. He loves it ſtill, and feeds and ſuſtains it.

The church is "the fulneſs of him who filleth all in all." Jeſus aſcended on high, that he might receive gifts to beſtow them on men. He has given his word and ordinances, ordained paſtors and teachers, and ſhed down divine and heavenly influences, "for the edifying of the church, until we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt."

"He aſcended far above all" theſe viſible "heavens, that he might fill all things" with his gifts, according to his promiſe to his diſciples, that he would ſend them the Spirit to comfort and teach them, and to abide with them. As in Chriſt all fulneſs dwells, ſo believers are complete in him, and of his fulneſs they receive grace for grace—— grace anſwerable to their caſes, and equal to their neceſſities.

All his government is managed in reference to the good of the church. He has made the world by his power; but the church he has purchaſed with his blood. He therefore has a peculiar concern for her, in diſtinction from the world; and, in ſubſervience to her intereſt, he directs all the affairs of his general dominion. He has promiſed, that he will finally make her victorious over all her enemies; and we may be aſſured, that all the revolutions of kingdoms, and all the diſpenſations of Providence will, under his direction, conduce to the fulfilment of this promiſe.

The church is inſtituted to train up rational beings in knowledge and holineſs, that they may become mete for everlaſting felicity in the future world. *This* muſt, then, be the moſt important branch of Chriſt's government; and to *this* all the other parts muſt be ſubſervient. If the happineſs of men in another ſtate, is of more value than all

temporal glory and riches; if that happineſs depends on moral qualifications; and if to form men to theſe qualifications is the great purpoſe for which the church was inſtituted and endowed; then it cannot be doubted, but that the Redeemer continually exerciſes his ſupreme dominion in reference to her edification and ſafety.

This thought ſhould give us much conſolation in the darkeſt periods of the church.

There are times, when from the approach of external dangers, or from the increaſe of internal corruptions, her ſtate appears critical and tending to ruin. But Chriſt will not forget his promiſe; "I the Lord do keep her, and leſt any hurt her, I will keep her night and day." He may viſit her tranſgreſſions with a rod; but his loving kindneſs he will not take from her, nor ſuffer his faithfulneſs to fail. He knows how to overrule the moſt threatening appearances for the advancement of her purity, and the eſtabliſhment of her ſafety. The time is coming, when ſhe will ariſe and ſhine, and her glory will ſpread through the earth: And thoſe circumſtances, which in humin view look moſt unfavorable, may, under the direction of divine wiſdom, contribute to the introduction of ſuch a happy period.

We ſee how criminal and dangerous it is to oppoſe the intereſt of the church.

As the church is Chriſt's body, which he nouriſhes and defends, and for which he is made head over all things, they who perſecute this, wound him in a moſt tender part:—They who cauſe diviſions in this, make a ſchiſm, or rent in his body:—They who form parties in oppoſition to each other, and ſtill call themſelves members of Chriſt, treat the one Savior, as if he were divided into as many parts, as there are ſects which aſſume his name: They who, by corrupt doctrines and examples, draw tender minds away from the truth as it

is in Jeſus, and throw ſtumbling blocks before the lame and the weak, are deſtroying thoſe for whom Chriſt died; and by thus ſinning againſt the brethren, they ſin againſt Chriſt: They who call Chriſt their Lord, and yet ſerve divers luſts and pleaſures, are enemies to his croſs, and their end will be deſtruction.

If the church is Chriſt's body, let us honor it; ſtudy to preſerve unity in it; labor for its edification and comfort; and, as fellow members of the ſame body, exerciſe for each other the ſame care as for ourſelves.

How ſafe and happy are they, who are the true members of Chriſt's body, being vitally united to him by faith! They are of that ſelect and diſtinguiſhed number, for whom he is made head over all things, and to whom all things under his direction, are working for good.

If Chriſt is the head of the body, and filleth all in all, let us daily look to him for counſel, comfort and ſupport; and, in the continual exerciſe of faith, derive from him all needed ſupplies of grace.

If we profeſs to be members of his body, let us move under his influence and in compliance with his directions. Let us honor and reverence our head, and never preſumptuouſly lift up ourſelves againſt it. And God grant, that, ſpeaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Chriſt our head, and may make increaſe, as his body, to the edifying of ourſelves in love.

SERMON X.

EPHESIANS ii. 1, 2, 3.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; wherein in time paſt, ye walked according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience; among whom alſo we all had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of the fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.

IF you will carefully attend to this epiſtle you will find that the thoughts expreſſed in it are cloſely connected, and one thought leads to another through the whole. Paul, both in his preaching and writing, was an accurate reaſoner, not an incoherent declaimer. The thoughts in the text, and the words following, ariſe out of thoſe which immediately precede. He had juſt deſcribed the glorious reſurrection, exaltation and dominion of Jeſus Chriſt, which, he tells the Epheſian believers, were pledges and earneſts of their final glorification in heaven. "Now," ſays he, "as God has raiſed up Chriſt your head, and ſet him at his own right hand; ſo he has quickened you, who once were dead in your ſins, and raiſed you

from the ſpirit of God, you then have the idea of a ſinner properly left to himſelf. But this is not your caſe. You have the goſpel in your hands; and it is daily proclaimed in your hearing. There is an agency of the divine Spirit attending it; and you have been, and, we hope, ſtill are in ſome degree the ſubjects of this agency. With theſe advantages, there is ſomething which you may do. Confound not your caſe with that of uninſtructed Heathens; for God has made your caſe different from theirs. In reſpect of the awakening and convincing motions of the Spirit, as well as in regard of external means, God has been beforehand with you. He has granted them before you ſought them. He has knocked at your door, before you invited him to come in. He ſtill ſtretches out his hand to the diſobedient and gainſaying. When the goſpel is called a miniſtration of the Spirit, and the Spirit is ſaid to be miniſtered to men in the hearing of faith—when Chriſt is ſaid to ſtand at their door and knock, that they may hear and open to him—when the Spirit is ſaid to ſtrive with the wicked—when God promiſes that he will pour out his ſpirit on the offspring of his people—when ſinners are reproved for having always reſiſted the Holy Ghoſt; and when they who oppoſe the goſpel, are ſaid to do deſpite to the ſpirit of grace; it is plainly ſuppoſed and implied that there is an operation of the Spirit, which attends the publication of the goſpel, and which is commonly afforded to them who hear the word of ſalvation; and that, in conſequence of this, they are capable of ſuch an attendance on the inſtituted means of religion, as may hopefully iſſue in their real converſion.

It is ſometimes aſked, whether any thing done by an unregenerate perſon can be acceptable to God? The anſwer depends on the meaning of the word *acceptable*. If hereby is intended that which intitles to a future reward, the anſwer muſt certain-

ly be in the negative. But if by this is meant that which, by the gracious appointment of God, may be uſeful in order to obtain the renewing influences of the divine Spirit; doubtleſs, in this ſenſe, ſomething may be done which is acceptable.

But is not every thing, done by the unregenerate, wholly ſinful and abominable in the ſight of God? In anſwer to this inquiry, let it be obſerved, that the unregenerate have the natural principles of hope and fear—theſe principles in awakened ſinners, are put in motion by the application of the divine word and the operations of the holy Spirit. Now thoſe prayers for mercy, thoſe watchings againſt ſin, thoſe reformations of life, and that attendance on means, to which ſinners are excited by the influence of the word and ſpirit of God, cannot be called *wholly* ſinful, or *perfectly* abominable in his ſight. God does not abominate the work of his own Spirit.

There is certainly, then, more hope of their obtaining ſalvation in the uſe, than in the neglect of appointed means. Hence they are called upon to "awake and ariſe from the dead"—"to repent and turn to God"—"to make them a new heart, and a new ſpirit.

Farther: From the metaphor uſed in the text we are not to conclude, that all ſinners are alike; for though all are in a ſenſe dead, yet ſome one, under a greater death than others. The metaphor is uſually in ſcripture applied to ſinners of the moſt vicious character. When we ſpeak of human nature, as *totally* depraved, we mean only a total deſtitution of real holineſs; not the higheſt poſſible degree of vitioſity. Native depravity may doubtleſs be increaſed by poſſitive habits. In order to denominate one a ſinner, it is not neceſſary, that he ſhould be as bad as poſſible. We are not to conclude ourſelves holy and regenerate merely becauſe we cannot find *every* vicious diſpoſition

operating in us to the greateſt imaginable degree. Though natural death does not, yet ſpiritual death does, admit of degrees. Evil men wax worſe and worſe; add ſin to ſin, and treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath.

But though we may not overſtrain this metaphor, yet there is an undoubted propriety in the application which the Apoſtle makes of it. The moral ſtate of wicked men much reſembles a ſtate of natural death.

They may be ſaid to be dead, in reſpect of their *ſtupidity*. We read of ſome, who are paſt feeling—whoſe conſcience is ſeared—who have eyes which ſee not, and ears which hear not, and a heart which is waxed groſs. This is in a high degree, the caſe of ſome ſinners, and more or leſs the caſe of all, until they are awakened by the grace of God. Look around; how eaſy and ſecure do multitudes appear! how unaffected with the moſt important concerns! how unmoved at the moſt awful threatenings! how indifferent about the conſequences of their ſins! Their hearts are like a mortified limb, which feels no pain under the ſcarifying knife.

They are repreſented as wanting *ſpiritual ſenſes*—they ſavor the things of the world; not the things which are of God. They, indeed, love the effects of God's goodneſs to them; but they delight not in his character, as a holy, juſt and faithful Being. They deſire heaven, under the general notion of a very happy place; but deſire not that which makes heaven a happy place, the preſence of the holy God, the ſociety of holy beings, and employment in holy ſervices. They have not a proper reliſh for God's worſhip, ordinances and word. They may, indeed, be pleaſed with them in ſome reſpects. We read of a wicked people, who took delight in approaching to God, and to whom God's word was as a lovely ſong of one that had a pleaſant voice, and could play well on an inſtrument. They may feel a natural pleaſure in certain mechanical emo-

tions of the paſſions excited by objects preſented to the ſight, or by ſounds which ſtrike the ear; as the artificial tears from the image of the Virgin Mary will melt down an aſſembly of Catholics; or as a concert of muſical inſtruments will rapture the hearers: But they reliſh not the word and ordinances of God, conſidered as means of holineſs, and as deſigned to convince them of their ſins, and bring them to repentance. They long not for the pure milk of divine ordinances, as the means of ſpiritual nutrition and increaſe. If the word diſpenſed comes home to their conſcience, they are offended. They loſe the muſic of the pleaſant ſong, and talk againſt it by the walls, and in the doors of their houſes.

They reſemble the dead in the want of *vital warmth*. If they have any fervor in religion, it is about the forms and externals of it, or about ſome favorite ſentiments, which they find well adapted to ſoothe their conſciences; not about thoſe things in which the power of religion conſiſts. Here they are formal and indifferent.

The motions of their ſouls are not toward heaven, but toward earth. They mind the things of the fleſh; not the things of the ſpirit.

As death deforms the body; ſo ſin deſtroys the beauty of the ſoul. It darkens the reaſon, perverts the judgment, and diſorders the affections. Thus to be carnally minded is death.

Sinners may be denominated dead, as they are worthy of, and expoſed to eternal puniſhment. This is in ſcripture often called death, becauſe it is the ſeparation of the ſoul from God and heaven, from happineſs and hope—from all good, and unto all evil. This is a death, which awaits the impenitent. "He who believeth not is condemned already—the wrath of God abideth on him."—There is no deliverance, but by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. The opportunity for this deliverance is ſhort and

precarious. Hence the impenitent may be called *dead men*, in regard of their daily expoſedneſs to everlaſting death. I proceed to obſerve,

II. The Apoſtle deſcribes theſe ſinners of the Gentiles, as having "walked according to the courſe of this world." They, like dead carcaſſes, ſwam down the ſtream of common cuſtom, and were carried away with the general current of vice and corruption.

There is in ungodly men a general diſpoſition to follow the way of the world. Hence theſe cautions and exhortations to profeſſing Chriſtians; "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye tranſformed by the renewing of your mind."—"Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; but put off the old man, and put on the new man."—"Keep yourſelves from this untoward generation."—"Be blameleſs and harmleſs, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation."

Moſt men have a general idea, that there is ſuch a thing as religion, and that it is a matter of ſome importance to the human race. So obvious is this ſentiment, that few can wholly ſuppreſs it, or reaſon themſelves out of it. But what religion is, and wherein it conſiſts, there are many who ſeldom inquire; and perhaps never examine with any degree of attention. The opinions, which are moſt prevalent, they implicitly adopt; and join themſelves to this or that profeſſion, or to none at all, becauſe others around them do ſo. Many, no doubt, believe chriſtianity in the ſame implicit manner, in which the Epheſians worſhipped *Diana* —"the great goddeſs, whom all Aſia and the world worſhipped." They are of this, or that denomination, rather than another, not becauſe their own inquiry decides in its favor, but only becauſe the way of the world gives it the preference. Such implicit believers, having no fixed principles of their own, are eaſily carried about by every new

wind of doctrine that ſprings up. Such opinions as flatter their ungodly luſts, or pacify their guilty conſciences, they warmly embrace. That ſcheme of doctrine, which will make converts without exacting reformation, and will give aſſurance without putting them to much labor, they highly approve. The path which will lead men to heaven with little ſelfdenial, they readily purſue.

There are many, who blindly follow the examples of the world. Whether ſuch a practice is right or wrong, they take little pains to examine. It is enough, that they ſee many who adopt it. If their conſcience condemns it, ſtill they will rather retain it, than diſſent from the faſhionable world. They have not fortitude to withſtand the ridicule of profane wits. They had rather incur the cenſure of their own minds, and the diſpleaſure of their God, than ſtand diſtinguiſhed by a ſingularity in virtue. It is a noble reſolution, which, in times of general corruption, will ſay, "Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God."—"If it ſeem evil to you to ſerve the Lord, chooſe ye, this day, whom ye will ſerve:—But, as for me, I will ſerve the Lord."

III. The Apoſtle repreſents theſe Epheſians, in their Heathen ſtate, as walking "according to the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience."

The ſcripture teaches us, that God, before he made man, created a ſuperior order of intelligences, whom he placed in a ſtate of probation; and that, of this order a vaſt number, revolting from his government, were thruſt out of heaven, their ancient habitation; and are now reſerved in chains, under darkneſs, to the judgment of the great day, when they will receive the full meaſure of the puniſhment due to their rebellion, being caſt into the place prepared for that purpoſe. The opinion of Jews and Heathens, that evil ſpirits inhabited the

lower regions of our atmoſphere, ſeems to be favored by the Apoſtle, who calls the devil "the prince of the power of the air"—and evil ſpirits "the rulers of the darkneſs of this world." And by our Savior, who calls them "the power of darkneſs."

Theſe evil ſpirits are ſaid "to work in the children of diſobedience"—"to enter into them"—"fill their hearts"—"lead them captive at their will." And the wickedneſs which prevails in the world is aſcribed to them, in ſuch terms as import, that they have much influence in its exiſtence and continuance. Wicked men are ſaid to be "of the devil." They are called "his children." The promoters of error and vice are denominated "the miniſters of Satan." And the place where wickedneſs and corruption abound is marked as "Satan's ſeat."

Theſe ſpirits often *tempt* the godly; but in the children of diſobedience they are ſaid to *enter*, to *dwell*, to *work*, to exerciſe an *energy*, an inwrought power; for theſe yield themſelves to their influence.

The number of evil Spirits is very great; but there is one diſtinguiſhed from the reſt, and called the devil, Satan, the prince of devils, the prince of the power of the air. The others are called his angels and miniſters.

Theſe Epheſians, before the goſpel came among them, "walked according to the prince of darkneſs." They doubtleſs, like other Heathens, not only obeyed his ſuggeſtions and did his works, but paid worſhip and did ſacrifice at his altar. The Heathen world is repreſented as the kingdom of Satan; and, on account of the influence which he had in it, and the homage which he received from it, he is called the *god* of it. That direction of the Apoſtle, concerning an excommunicated perſon, "that he ſhould be delivered unto Satan," probably intends, that he ſhould be caſt out of Chriſt's church into the world, which is the kingdom of

Satan; or ſhould be conſidered as a Heathen, one who had revolted from Chriſt, and joined himſelf again to the kingdom of darkneſs.

The influence of Satan, though greatly diminiſhed where the goſpel comes, yet is not wholly extinguiſhed. He ſtill works in the ungodly; and even the ſaints he deſires to have, that he may ſift them as wheat—may agitate and vex them with his temptations. In what manner he works in the minds of men, it is difficult for us to ſay; but the medium of his acceſs ſeems to be their paſſions and luſts, which he inflames by ſuggeſting evil thoughts, or by painting images on the fancy. It was by the avarice of Judas, and of Ananias, that he entered into them and filled their hearts. They who have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs, are the perſons to whom he comes with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs, and in whom he works ſtrong deluſions. They who, departing from the right way, give heed to ſeducing ſpirits—they who, laying aſide the plain inſtructions of ſcripture, yield themſelves up to the power of a heated imagination, and to the conduct of deceitful workers, are the perſons to whom Satan transforms himſelf into an angel of light. That we may ſecure ourſelves, then, from his ſubtil influence, we muſt mortify our luſts, rule our paſſions, reſtrain the wild ſallies of fancy, and follow the plain dictates of divine revelation. Our mother Eve was not drawn into diſobedience, until ſhe began to liſten to the devil's perverſe interpretation of God's command, and to imagine there might be in it ſome hidden ſenſe, which her own ſagacity had not diſcovered. The Apoſtle expreſſes his concern for the Corinthians, "leſt, as the ſerpent beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty, ſo their minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt."

IV. The Apoſtle ſays, "We all, in time paſt, had our converſation among the children of diſo-

bedience, in the luſts of the fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind."

The wickedneſs of ſinners conſiſts, not merely in their evil works, but eſpecially in the corrupt diſpoſitions which prompt them to thoſe works.—— Theſe diſpoſitions are of two ſorts; "the *luſts* of the *fleſh*; and the *deſires* of the *fleſh* and of the *mind*;" or of the *fleſhly mind*—the mind ſunk into a ſenſual frame, and devoted to carnal intereſts.

The luſts of the *fleſh*, properly ſo called, are the vices of ſenſuality, which have their origin immediately from the fleſh; ſuch as intemperance, uncleanneſs, debauchery and exceſs of riot. The deſires of the fleſhly *mind* are the luſts which ariſe from the corruption of the mind in its connexion with fleſh; ſuch as pride, malice, envy, wrath, hatred, ambition and covetouſneſs. Theſe two ſorts of ſins the Apoſtle diſtinguiſhes in his epiſtle to Titus. "We once ſerved divers luſts and pleaſures —and we lived in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

The Apoſtle ſays, "We *all* had our converſation in the luſts of the fleſh."

Every unrenewed perſon is under the power of a carnal mind. No man, indeed, lives in the indulgence of *every* luſt; for ſome luſts are inconſiſtent with others; and that which predominates will naturally exclude thoſe which oppoſe the gratification of itſelf. Covetouſneſs makes ſome men temperate; and pride makes others liberal. The denial of particular luſts, is not a concluſive evidence of a ſanctified heart. If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature, all things are become new." Though no man indulges every vice, yet every unregenerate man obeys the carnal mind in ſome way or other; and whoever is under the dominion of any ungodly luſt, vicious habit, or evil paſſion, is in a ſtate of unregeneracy.

V. The Apoſtle adds, "We were by nature children of wrath, even as others." The words are parallel to thoſe in the 5th chapter; "No unclean perſon or covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Chriſt and of God.—Let not uncleanneſs or covetouſneſs be once named among you, for becauſe of theſe things, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience."

The Apoſtle here expreſsly warns us, that the indulgence of carnal luſts and paſſions, brings on men the wrath of God. A mind ſunk into carnality is incapable of a rational felicity; it is miſerable in itſelf, and from its own corruption and perverſeneſs.

Man is by the Author of his nature endued with reaſon, as the ſuperior, preſiding faculty. If this is ſubjected to the luſts and paſſions, the order of nature is inverted, the law of creation violated, and the Creator diſhonored and offended.

Let no man plead, that by fulfilling the luſts of the fleſh and of the mind, he follows nature. The Apoſtle teaches us, that our nature is corrupted; and therefore our buſineſs is not to obey its propenſities, but to rectify its diſorders. We are, by nature, children of diſobedience and of wrath.—We come on the ſtage of the world, with ſuch an innate depravity, as draws us into evil and expoſes us to miſery. Now if our nature is depraved and the mind become carnal, then mere propenſity and blind inclination cannot be a rule to guide our conduct. Reaſon muſt preſide over the paſſions; and that it may preſide with equity, it muſt take its directions from the light which God has given in the goſpel. The work of renovation reſtores reaſon to its place, and brings the fleſh under its dominion.

By the word *nature*, in our text, ſome underſtand *habit*; and ſuppoſe the Apoſtle to mean, "that by

cuſtom and practice we are become children of wrath, having fulfilled the deſires of the fleſh."—But if we admit, that by nature the Apoſtle intends habit, ſtill the ſame concluſion will follow, that human nature is in a ſtate of depravity; for he ſays, "We *all* had our converſation in the luſts of the fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and mind, and were children of wrath." If this is the character of *all* men, until they are renewed by grace, we muſt ſuppoſe, that ſome moral diſorder has taken place in our nature; otherwiſe we cannot account for this univerſal prevalence of wickedneſs. If there were in the mind no evil bias, but all were inclined rather to virtue, than to vice, why are there not ſome—a few at leaſt—who eſcape theſe evil habits, and obtain ſalvation without a renewal of their nature? Whatever be the ſenſe of this particular word, the general doctrine is the ſame, that all have ſinned; and all need renovation by the Spirit, and pardon through the blood of Jeſus Chriſt.

We ſee, from the Apoſtles deſcription, what is the awful condition of impenitent ſinners. They are dead in their ſins, and condemned to eternal death. They follow the corrupt ways of a guilty world;—they are led captive by Satan;—they are ſlaves to the luſts of the fleſh and the paſſions of the mind;—they are under the wrath of a holy God. O ſinners, can you believe that this is your condition, and yet remain in thoughtleſs ſecurity?—Awake: Flee from the wrath to come; lay hold on the hope, which the goſpel ſets before you.

Some perhaps, will ſay, "This deſcription agreed well to the character and condition of thoſe ancient Heathens—but it will not apply to us, who enjoy the goſpel—for we have never run to ſuch exceſſes in vice as they had."

Be it ſo: Yet remember, that this goſpel is the gift of God, and for it you are accountable. If you have not, like them, abandoned yourſelves to

the groſſeſt forms of vice; it is becauſe you have been placed under ſuperior light, and enjoyed a happier education. Bleſs God who has made you to differ; and conſider alſo, that, under your circumſtances, leſs degrees of vice may involve you in equal guilt with them. If you have that knowledge of God and religion—thoſe motives and encouragements to virtue—thoſe diſcoveries of the wrath of God againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men—thoſe hopes of pardon and grace through a Savior, which they never had, then the excuſes which might be pleaded for them, cannot be admitted for you. And if they were children of wrath, becauſe they walked according to the courſe of this world—indulging the luſts of the fleſh and the deſires of the mind, how much more are you children of wrath, while you walk like them.

Remember too, that though you may not have indulged *all* the luſts and vices, which ſome others have done, yet, if you are children of diſobedience, you can no more be ſaved without renovation of heart and repentance of ſin, than they can.——And repentance, in its general nature, muſt be the ſame in you, as in them;—even a change of heart from the love of ſin, to the love of God's commands. If you think this repentance neceſſary for ſome groſs ſinners——know, it is as neceſſary for you, as for them.——If you believe, that great ſinners are children of wrath—know, that all ſinners are ſuch. And ſuch are you, while the love of ſin reigns in your hearts, although, by the reſtraints of God's Providence and grace, you have been kept back from ſome preſumptuous ſins. Think ſeriouſly on your guilt and danger, and apply to God, who is rich in mercy, that he would quicken you together with Chriſt, and raiſe you up, and make you to ſit together with him in heavenly places: For by grace ye are ſaved.

SERMON XI.

EPHESIANS ii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt, (by grace ye are ſaved) and hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus, that in the ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindneſs toward us by Jeſus Chriſt.

IN the preceding verſes, our Apoſtle deſcribes the deplorable ſtate in which the goſpel found the Epheſians and other Gentile nations, when it firſt came among them.

In the words now read we ſhall contemplate, the happy change which the goſpel made in them —the rich mercy of God in effecting this change— and the General purpoſe of God's particular mercy to them.

I. We will conſider the happy change which the goſpel made in the Epheſians—a change not peculiar to them, but common to all ſincere believers. "He hath quickened us, raiſed us up, and made us ſit together with Chriſt.

1. He hath *quickened* us, or made us *alive* with Chriſt, in oppoſition to the ſtate before deſcribed, when we were *dead* in treſpaſſes and ſins.

True Chriſtians are *alive*, as they have ſpiritual *ſenſes* and *appetites*.

The *eyes* of their *underſtanding* are *enlightened* to *diſcern* the things of the ſpirit of God in their truth and importance. They *look* at things future and unſeen, and regard them as real and preſent.

The heart of *ſtone* is changed into a *tender* and *ſenſible* heart. They can now be *pierced* with the conviction, and *pained* with the burden of ſin—they *feel* their weakneſs and need of grace to help. They *tremble* at God's word, and are *afraid* of his judgments. They are *watchful* againſt temptations, and when ſin ſurpriſes them, their hearts *ſmite* them with godly ſorrow.

They *favor* the things which are of God. Having *taſted* that he is gracious, they *hunger* and *thirſt* after freſh ſupplies of his grace, and *deſire* the ſincere milk of his word, that they may grow thereby.

They are *fervent* in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord—zealous to repent, and to maintain good works—careful to know, and active to do God's will—ſolicitous to ſecure his favor, and ſtand approved in his ſight.

They have ſpiritual *motions*. The divine principle within them directs their thoughts toward God, and their courſe toward heaven. They walk with God in newneſs of life—they run the way of his commandments. Waiting on the Lord, they renew their ſtrength, mount up with wings as eagles; they run and are not weary—they walk and faint not.

They have ſpiritual *pleaſures*, which once they were unacquainted with—pleaſures reſulting from a ſenſe of God's favor—from a conſciouſneſs of ſincerity—from a hope of immortality—from a victory over ſin—from communion with God—and from anticipations of glory.

They poſſeſs ſpiritual *powers*. Strengthened with might by the ſpirit in the inner man, they can bear

afflictions with patience—meet dangers with fortitude—perform duty with cheerfulneſs—and encounter temptations with ſucceſs.

They *grow* in grace. Senſible of the imperfection of all their attainments, they deſire to abound more and more in knowledge, faith, love, and every good work, and to reach the ſtature of perfect men in Chriſt.

The Apoſtle ſays, "We are quickened *together with Chriſt.*"

Our ſpiritual life comes *through him.* "He bare our ſins, that we, being dead to ſin, ſhould live to righteouſneſs." It is through his attonement and interceſſion, that God grants the external means of life, and his quickening Spirit to attend them. "We are ſaved by the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, which God has ſhed on us through Chriſt."

The ſpiritual life in believers is *conformed to Chriſt.* They have the ſame mind which was in him. His life is manifeſted in them. Hence he is ſaid to be *formed in them,* and they are ſaid to grow up in all things *into him.*

2. God hath *raiſed us up* together with Chriſt.

On the certainty of his reſurrection depends the credit of the goſpel. "If he be not riſen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is alſo vain." This being the foundation of the chriſtian faith, God took care that it ſhould be firmly eſtabliſhed by the circumſtances of the fact—by the teſtimony of angels and men—of friends and enemies—by numerous miracles—and by the fulfilment of divers predictions of the ancient prophets and of the Savior himſelf. Hence the Apoſtle ſays, "He was declared to be the Son of God *with power,* by his reſurrection from the dead."

God is ſaid to have raiſed up believers *with him.* The *paſt* time is uſed for the *future* to expreſs the certainty of the event.

His reſurrection is the *proof* and the *pattern* of theirs.

It is the *proof* of theirs. "Now is Chriſt riſen and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept." The firſt fruits are the pledge of the harveſt. "He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firſt born from the dead." If the head is raiſed, the members united to it will riſe alſo. "If we believe, that Jeſus died and roſe again, even ſo them that ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring with him." Chriſt's reſurrection ſhews our reſurrection to be poſſible, and it confirms the truth of the goſpel, which declares the event to be certain. "God has begotten us to a lively hope by the reſurrection of Chriſt." On the ground of this aſſurance, believers are ſaid to be raiſed with him.

His reſurrection is the *pattern* of theirs. "We look for a Savior from heaven, who ſhall change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like to his glorious body." Being planted together in the likeneſs of his death, we ſhall ſpring up alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection." The Apoſtle adds,

3. God hath made us *ſit together* in heavenly places in Chriſt.

Chriſt's entrance into heaven, is a full proof of the final ſalvation of believers. He as their friend and patron is gone to prepare a place for them; to take poſſeſſion of the purchaſed inheritance and keep it in reſerve until their arrival. They are ſaid to ſit with him in heaven, becauſe he ſits there for them, to take care of their intereſt, and in due time will bring them to ſit where he is. "Their life is hid with Chriſt in God, and when Chriſt ſhall appear, they will appear with him in glory." Their happineſs will greatly conſiſt in being with him. This was his prayer for his diſciples; "Father, I will that they whom thou haſt given me, may be with me where I am, and behold my glory." This was St. Paul's conſolation in his perſe-

cutions; "If we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him; if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him." This was his joy in the proſpect of death: "We are confident and willing to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord."

How vaſt is the change produced in thoſe who have received the goſpel with faith and love!—Once dead in their ſins, children of wrath, condemned to eternal puniſhment, they are now quickened with Chriſt, raiſed up and made to ſit with him in heavenly places. They have paſſed from death to life—from guilt to pardon—from enmity to peace with God; and of the children of wrath they are become heirs of glory.

Our text leads us,

II. To contemplate the *mercy* of God in this great change. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love hath quickened us with Chriſt. By grace are ye ſaved."

Mercy is a particular branch of goodneſs, which is a diſpoſition to communicate happineſs. Goodneſs regards its objects as capable of happineſs. Mercy reſpects them as beings in a ſtate of miſery or danger; and it operates variouſly, according to their circumſtances, by averting, ſuſpending, moderating, or preventing their miſery, or overruling it to their benefit.

The mercy of God is in ſcripture illuſtrated by that compaſſion which we feel in the view of others in diſtreſs. He condeſcends to ſpeak after the manner of men, and to repreſent himſelf as *grieved* and even *afflicted* in our afflictions, and as feeling his *heart turned*, and his *bowels moved*, when he inflicts on us his holy corrections. Such expreſſions are uſed, not to ſignify that there is really any commotion in the divine mind, but to give us a more familiar, as well as more exalted idea of the divine mercy.

"God is *rich* in mercy."

His mercies are rich *in extent.* They are not confined to us: They fill the earth—they are great unto the heavens—they ſpread over all his works.

They are rich in *number.* "How precious are God's thoughts toward us! How great is the ſum of them! If we would count them, they are more than the ſand."

They are rich in reſpect of *conſtancy.* They flow in an uninterrupted ſtream. They endure continually. We are loaded with them daily. When we lie down, and when we awake, we are ſtill with God.

They are rich in *variety.* By them we are relieved in trouble, ſupplied in want, protected in danger, comforted in ſorrow, guided in doubt, ſecured in temptation, ſtrengthened in weakneſs and preſerved to ſalvation.

They are rich in *value.* "God is our ſun and ſhield, he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly."

The Apoſtle, having aſſerted in general terms, that God is rich in mercy, ſelects a particular inſtance to illuſtrate the doctrine. "For the great love, wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in ſin, he hath quickened us with Chriſt." And greater love cannot be imagined.

He *firſt* loved us. His love to us originated with himſelf. "He ſaved and called us, not according to our works, for we we were dead in ſins, but according to his own purpoſe and grace." "It was in his own ſelfmoving mercy, that he gave his Son to be a propitiation for us—that he bleſſed the world with the light of revelation—that he aſſigned us a place within this glorious light—that he hath ſhined into any of our hearts and given the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of his Son.

His love appears the greater, becauſe it is exerciſed toward us, *through Jeſus Chriſt.* "He that

delivered up his Son for us, how ſhall he not with him alſo, freely give us all things?"

His love ſhines ſtill brighter, when we conſider what a Being he is.

He is infinitely *above us.* "He humbles himſelf to behold the things which are in heaven;" much more to regard the things which are on earth. We tread on worms and inſects without concern, for we think them too impotent to take revenge, and too contemptable to deſerve regard. Does God treat us with this indifference? The ſtars are not clean in his ſight: How much leſs man who is a worm?"—"Yet he viſits us every moment."

He is *ſelfſufficient.* His happineſs is in himſelf. "If we ſin, what do we to him? And if we are righteous, what receiveth he at our hands?" His mercy is wholly diſintereſted. It is what we did not deſerve, and cannot remunerate. Our impotence cannot give, nor can his fulneſs receive a recompenſe.

"He is not worſhipped by men's hands, as if he needed any thing." All creation was his work, and is at his command. If this were not ſufficient for his purpoſe, he, who has the reſidue of the Spirit, can call into exiſtince other ſyſtems to diſplay his goodneſs, wiſdom and power. There is reaſon to believe, that men make but a ſmall part of the intelligent univerſe. Certainly there are orders far more noble than we; and probably they are far more numerous. How wonderful it is, that amidſt the immenſity of God's works, our race is ſo mercifully remembered!

His mercy appears more rich and glorious, when we contemplate it in connexion with his *purity.* His holineſs abhors ſin, and yet his mercy can forgive it. Our readineſs to forgive is often an indifference to ſin, rather than a love of mercy. But God's mercy to ſinners is not at all reſtrained by

his hatred of their ſins. He would not that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance; and them who repent he abundantly pardons.

The goſpel gives us the moſt exalted conceptions of God's character. That he is good and merciful is a dictate of reaſon: But that *great love* wherewith he loved us is diſcovered only by the revelation of Chriſt. The light of nature, whatever hints it may be ſuppoſed to give us concerning the character of God, could never teach us that he will be merciful to *ſinners*—merciful to *us*—merciful in *this* or *that* particular *way*; for his mercy is directed by wiſdom; and we cannot determine how, and to whom it will be exerciſed, becauſe without information from him, we cannot judge what his wiſdom will ſee to be beſt. To revelation therefore we are wholly indebted for our aſſurance, that God will pardon ſin on repentance, give his Spirit to them who aſk it, and beſtow eternal life on them who patiently continue in well doing.

III. We are, laſtly, to conſider the *general* purpoſe of God's *particular* mercy to theſe Epheſians. "God quickened them—that *in the ages to come* he might ſhew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindneſs to *them* by Jeſus Chriſt." "For this cauſe alſo Paul obtained mercy, that in him firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all longſuffering for a pattern to them who ſhould afterward believe."

God's ways are not as ours. It is by a labored proceſs that we accompliſh a ſingle purpoſe: He by the ſame means brings about many purpoſes. In the exerciſes of his mercy toward particular ſinners he deſigns not *their* benefit *only*, but that of others alſo. His mercy in reclaiming one tranſgreſſor may operate to the ſalvation of thouſands in ages to come. The converſion of this ſinner not only encourages others to ſeek God's mercy, but

alſo places this perſon in a ſituation for more extenſive uſefulneſs. He who before deſtroyed, now promotes much good. What a vaſt and laſting benefit to the world was the converſion of the Apoſtle Paul? He obtained mercy, not for his own ſake only, but rather that he might ſtand an encouraging pattern of divine grace, and might go and preach among the nations the unſearchable riches of Chriſt. Paul calls himſelf the chief of ſinners. Some not ſo guilty as he, may have periſhed in their ſins. Is God partial then in beſtowing his grace? No; but he is ſovereign. And may he not do what he will with his own? They who periſh have abuſed and forfeited his grace. Is he unjuſt in withdrawing it? What if ſome more criminal than theſe are recovered by abundant grace? Is there unrighteouſneſs with God? By no means: For the recovery of theſe is deſigned for the benefit of many, and is a prejudice to none. Paul, who had been a great ſinner, was reclaimed by a divine voice and ſupernatural light from heaven. Why was not the ſame favor vouchſafed to many others, who had done leſs than he to injure Chriſt's cauſe? The anſwer is; God had done much for them: They had no ground of complaint. But he reclaimed this offender, becauſe he was a fit inſtrument to carry into effect the grand purpoſes of grace, in behalf of fallen men. "He was a choſen veſſel to bear Chriſt's name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Iſrael." His capacity, education and circumſtances, rendered him a proper perſon to be employed in ſpreading the goſpel. And therefore, God's ſpecial mercy to him in his converſion, was general goodneſs to mankind.

The goſpel diſpenſation, in which we are more immediately concerned, was intended to ſerve ſome uſeful purpoſes among other intelligences. Chriſt is made head over all things in heaven, as well as

in earth. The angels deſire to look into the marvellous ſcheme of man's redemption. The unſearchable riches of Chriſt are preached to men, not only to make them underſtand the myſtery, which from the beginning has been hidden in God, but alſo that unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be known by the church, the manifold wiſdom of God.

And not only God's gracious diſpenſation to fallen men, but alſo his righteous ſeverity toward irreclaimable offenders, is deſigned for extenſive beneficial influence. His providential chaſtenings are intended for the warning of beholders, as well as for the reformation of the ſufferers. His judgments are ſent abroad, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteouſneſs. And even the final puniſhment of the impenitent may probably promote ſome of the benevolent ends of God's moral government, and be forever of uſe to other intelligent beings.

We are not to imagine, that God will injure *one* for the greater good of *another*, or of a *number*. To inflict undeſerved puniſhment, would be injuſtice to the *involuntary* ſufferers, whatever benefit might reſult to others. And there is no unrighteouſneſs with God. But we may ſuppoſe, that his wiſdom and goodneſs will make the juſt puniſhment of particular offenders, redound to the greater and more extenſive happineſs of his virtuous ſubjects. We know not but the moſt rigorous acts of his juſtice may, in ſome view or other, be acts of mercy and goodneſs.

How ſhould we be filled with admiration of that Being, whoſe particular favors are general kindneſſes; whoſe righteous judgments are acts of goodneſs; and who in the exerciſes of his juſtice makes mercy triumphant?

What abundant cauſe of gratitude have we, for the diſcoveries of divine grace, made to us in the

goſpel? What elſe could ſave the ſinner, rouſed to an apprehenſion of his own guilt and of God's juſtice, from running into diſtraction and deſpair? Nature gives him no more reaſon to conclude, that God will pardon him on future repentance, than that he will puniſh him for paſt diſobedience. And be ſure, when he finds his repentance imperfect, his reſolutions unſtable, his offences again repeated, and his ſtrength unequal to the conqueſt of his vicious habits, what poſitive hope can nature give him, that God will aſſiſt him by his grace or pardon him by his mercy? To the awakened ſinner the goſpel comes as tidings of great joy.

Let believers adore the riches of God's grace. Some in the high road to deſtruction have been mercifully arreſted and reclaimed. Theſe ſhould love much. And even they who have earlier found mercy in the diligent uſe of means, muſt acknowledge, that by the grace of God they are what they are.

Every unreclaimed ſinner muſt be utterly inexcuſeable; for he has received the grace of God in vain.

Let the awakened be encouraged to ſeek ſalvation. Draw hope from the examples of God's mercy to others; improve every good beginning in yourſelves; let every conviction excite you to ſeek more grace; wait upon God, and hope in his mercy, that the work begun in you will be performed to the day of Chriſt.

SERMON XII.

EPHESIANS ii. 8, 9, 10.

For by grace are ye ſaved through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God: Not of works leſt any man ſhould boaſt; for we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we ſhould walk in them.

THE Apoſtle here aſſerts, in general terms, that *our ſalvation is of grace.* This is an obvious concluſion from the doctrine already propoſed and proved. If, when we were dead in ſins, God hath quickened us and raiſed us up with Chriſt, our ſalvation can be only in a way of grace; for they who are dead, ſurely can do nothing which ſhould deſerve ſo mighty an interpoſition for their recovery.

In what ſenſe our ſalvation is of grace the Apoſtle next explains. *It is not of ourſelves; it is the gift of God.* That which is a gift from God, without any right of demand on our part, is of grace. As the goſpel finds us involved in guilt, ſlaves to the world, and children of wrath, we can pretend no claim to ſalvation: If we obtain it, we muſt be wholly indebted to divine mercy.

This truth the Apoſtle farther illuſtrates by ſtating the *manner* in which we are ſaved. *We are ſaved by faith, not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt.*—The great condition of our ſalvation is *faith*; and this in its nature includes a reliance on the promiſe of God. And if ſalvation comes to us in conſequence of our truſting in the promiſe which God has freely made, it comes only by grace. *Not of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt.* Works, indeed, are neceſſary to ſalvation, for *God hath ordained that we ſhould walk in them*: But works give us no cauſe of boaſting; for *we are created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works.*

We will here conſider, How we are ſaved by faith—illuſtrate the influence that works have in our ſalvation—and ſhew that our ſalvation, though connected with works, is not the leſs of grace.

I. We will conſider, How we are ſaved by, or through faith.

The ſalvation here intended, the Apoſtle deſcribes in the former chapter, and in the preceding verſes of this. It is a deliverance from that ruined ſtate into which the apoſtacy has plunged us, and a reſtoration to the divine favor with all its happy effects. It is begun here in the pardon of ſin;—it is completed in the enjoyment of the glorious riches of the heavenly inheritance, and in our ſitting with Chriſt Jeſus, who is now on the right hand of the throne of God.

The faith, through which we are ſaved, is expreſſed by "our *truſting*, and *believing* in Chriſt, after we have heard the word of truth and the goſpel of our ſalvation." This faith is accompanied with a divine power which quickens and raiſes the ſoul, once dead in ſin, to a ſpiritual life in conformity to the pattern of Chriſt. The fruit of faith is our being *ſealed* and ſanctified by the Spirit of promiſe, and having in our ſouls an earneſt of the future inheritance.

To form an idea of the nature of ſaving faith, we need only to conſider, what we ourſelves are, and what the goſpel of Chriſt is. We are fallen, guilty creatures, children of diſobedience, worthy of death. The goſpel is a diſcovery of the way of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt. Faith, therefore, is the conſent and ſubmiſſion of the ſoul to this way of ſalvation. It is ſuch a perſuaſion, that Jeſus is the Son of God and the Savior of men, and ſuch a deſire and expectation of ſalvation through him, as engages us to commit our ſouls to his care, and devote our lives to his ſervice. The operation of faith, is to caſt down our vain imaginations, to humble within us every high thing which exalts itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obdience of Chriſt.

When we are ſaid to be *ſaved* by faith, theſe two things are implied, That without faith we cannot be ſaved—and that all who have faith will be ſaved.

1. The expreſſion implies, that without faith we cannot be ſaved.

This is the expreſs doctrine of our divine Savior. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins. He that believeth not is condemned already. He ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Faith is neceſſary in the *appointment* of God.—As ſalvation is his gift, ſo he has ſtated the terms on which he will beſtow it; and it is abſurd to expect it on any other. Obſtinate unbelief is a refuſal of that plan of ſalvation, which his wiſdom has fixed; and therefore a rejection of ſalvation itſelf.

Faith is neceſſary in the *nature* of the caſe; for when ſalvation is offered in a particular way, our refuſing to accept it in this way, diſcovers ſuch pride

and perverſeneſs of heart as render us incapable of enjoying it in any way.

Whatever knowledge we have of the doctrines of the goſpel, if this knowledge is not accompanied with ſuch a belief of thoſe doctrines as gives them a humbling and purifying influence, it cannot ſave us. The knowledge of religion, if it is only ſpeculative, is, like other ſpeculative knowledge, uſeleſs and vain. If a man have all knowledge, and have not charity, he is nothing.—Knowledge puffeth up; but charity edifieth.

Morality without faith will not ſave us. Morality, indeed, in the largeſt ſenſe of the word, compriſes the whole of religion—not only external good works, but a right temper of heart—not only the ſocial virtues, juſtice, truth and honeſty; but the graces of piety, love to God and faith in the Redeemer. But morality, taken in the vulgar ſenſe for the external practice of virtue, and a freedom from groſs impiety and wickedneſs, will not avail to our ſalvation. There muſt be purity of heart; And wherever this takes place, there will be a humble ſubmiſſion to, and reliance on that glorious Mediator, whom God has appointed and revealed.—It is morally right, that we ſhould regard all beings according to their known relations to us. And ſince Chriſt is exhibited to us in the character and relation of a Redeemer, it is as reaſonable and neceſſary, that we ſhould regard and truſt him in this relation, as that we ſhould love and fear God.—And it is as abſurd for us, who enjoy the goſpel, to pretend to virtue and piety without faith in Chriſt, as without reverence to the Deity.

2. The expreſſion in the text implies, that all who have faith will be ſaved.

This the goſpel expreſsly declares and promiſes in a variety of terms and phraſes, which are ſo familiar to you, that I need not rehearſe them.

When we read thoſe paſſages, which contain the promiſes of ſalvation to faith, we muſt always keep in mind, what the goſpel means by faith—not a mere aſſent to, and profeſſion of the truth; but ſuch a belief as purifies the heart and governs the life. Salvation is promiſed to repentance and to obedience, as well as to faith; for theſe are all connected together, and each includes the other.—Faith ſuppoſes a conviction of ſin and a ſenſe of guilt; for without theſe we ſhall not feel our need of ſalvation, nor apply to Jeſus for it. A ſoul humbled for ſin, and ſeeking deliverance from it, will form reſolutions againſt it, and purpoſes of new obedience. It is therefore abſurd to ſay, that a believer will be ſaved by his faith, though he continues in the practice of ſin; for the indulgence of ſin is inconſiſtent with faith. A believer, through error of judgment, infirmity of nature, or force of temptation, may, contrary to his general diſpoſition, be betrayed into particular miſcarriages; but there cannot be allowed and cuſtomary diſobedience to the goſpel, where real faith exiſts, becauſe that is contrary to the nature of faith.

Whoever believes with the faith, which the Apoſtle deſcribes in this epiſtle, will be ſaved; for he has has the promiſe of ſalvation—he is prepared for it—God has wrought him to it and already given him the earneſts of it. Whatever his former life has been—whatever crimes he has committed—whatever guilt he has contracted, yet, on his thus ſubmitting to the government, and relying on the power and grace of Chriſt, he is juſtified and accepted: His ſins are forgiven, and his eternal happineſs is ſecured. As his paſt ſins, now ſincerely repented of, do not exclude him from favor, ſo neither will his future imperfections nullify his pardon; for he lives by faith in the Son of God, and his faith operates to vigilance, ſelfexamination and renewed exerciſes of repentance. "There is

no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit." I proceed,

II. To ſhew what place and influence works have in our ſalvation. The Apoſtle ſays, "We are not ſaved of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt;" and yet adds, "We are created to good works, which God hath ordained that we ſhould walk in them." He ſignifies, that works have ſome concern in our ſalvation; but not ſuch a concern as gives cauſe of boaſting. It will be proper for us to ſtate this diſtinction.

1. We will conſider, in what ſenſe our ſalvation is not of works.

In general, it is not of works in ſuch a ſenſe, that any man can boaſt. Whatever place works have in the ſcheme of goſpel religion, they give no pretence to boaſt that we are ſaved of ourſelves.

(1.) We are not ſaved by works, conſidered as a fulfilment of the original law of nature. The law of God requires perfection, and condemns every man, who continues not in all things written therein. It is the nature of a law to demand a full compliance with itſelf. To ſuppoſe that it ſhould point out duty, and yet allow a deviation from it, is a contradiction. As all have ſinned, none can be ſaved on the foot of works, or of obedience to the law. All are already condemned for having violated this law, and no future works can reverſe this condemnation.

In the queſtion concerning the efficacy of good works to juſtification before God, it is neceſſary that we diſtinguiſh between good works in general, and thoſe of fallen men in particular. If the queſtion be, Whether an innocent being will be accepted on the foot of his innocence, and rewarded according to his righteouſneſs, reaſon anſwers in the affirmative; and ſo anſwers the Apoſtle: "The man that doth the things contained in the law, ſhall

live in them."—"To him that worketh," according to the tenor of the law, continuing in all things written in it, "The reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt;" not as beſtowed by the grace of God through a Mediator, but as due according to the tenor of the law, which promiſes life to obedience. If a man obeys God in all things, he needs no pardon, for he is expoſed to no puniſhment; but may rely on the purity and juſtice of God to treat him according to his innocence. But if the queſtion be, Whether the good works of ſuch beings as *we* are, can claim a reward, the ſtate of the queſtion is altered; for we are already under condemnation for our evil works. On the foot of juſtice we can claim no more, than not to be puniſhed beyond our deſerts. We cannot demand a reward for the good we ſhall do; for juſtice condemns us already for the evil we have done. If our paſt tranſgreſſions are forgiven, and our future obedience rewarded, it muſt be merely on the foot of grace and bounty.

(2.) We are not ſaved by virtue of any works done before faith in Chriſt; for none of theſe are properly *good*. "We are God's workmanſhip created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works." If it is in conſequence of our being created of God in Chriſt, that we perform works really good, then we are not ſaved of works, in ſuch a ſenſe as gives cauſe for boaſting. For evidently we cannot boaſt a claim to life on the foot of thoſe works, which we perform only by the grace of God. We cannot ſay, we deſerve heaven for thoſe good things which we have done by God's working in us to will and to do, of his good pleaſure. So the Apoſtle ſtates the caſe in his epiſtle to Titus. "We were ſometime fooliſh and diſobedient, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures; but after the kindneſs and love of God toward man appeared, not by works of righteouſneſs which we had done, but according to his mer-

cy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghoſt, which he hath ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Savior, that being juſtified by his grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Believers are not ſaved by their works, for they become entitled to ſalvation by faith, before they perform works properly good. When that temper is found in them which leads to thoſe works, they are accepted, even before there is a diſplay of the temper in the works themſelves. And if they ſhould be removed, at this criſis, doubtleſs the omniſcient God, who in ſuch caſes, calls things which are not, as if they were, approves and rewards thoſe works of holineſs which he diſcerned in the Spirit of mind, though there was not opportunity for the actual performance of them.

In theſe reſpects we are not ſaved of works. But yet,

2. There is a ſenſe in which good works are of abſolute neceſſity to ſalvation. So the Apoſtle teaches us, when he ſays, "We are created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works, which God has ordained, that we ſhould walk in them."

(1.) They are neceſſary, as being radically included in that faith by which we are ſaved. "As the body without the Spirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo." Faith, as we have obſerved, includes repentance of ſins that are paſt, and a dedication of our future lives to the ſervice of Chriſt. The word of God effectually works in them who believe. A diſpoſition to works of righteouſneſs, is as eſſential to faith, and therefore as neceſſary to ſalvation, as a truſt in the righteouſneſs of the Redeemer. The man, who, preſuming that he has believed to the ſaving of his ſoul, reconciles himſelf to a wicked life, does but deceive his own heart; the truth is not in him.

(2.) A temper diſpoſing us to good works, is a neceſſary qualification for heaven. "Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." And one that is born again, is created in Chriſt unto good works. "Without holineſs no man can ſee the Lord."—"Into heaven nothing enters that defiles." Whatever pretenſions we may make to faith and the new creature, yet if we have not put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitful luſts, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs, it is manifeſt, that we are not renewed in the Spirit of our mind, nor have learnt the truth as it is in Jeſus. Hence,

(3.) Works are neceſſary as evidences of our faith in Chriſt, and of our title to heaven.

As theſe are the fruits of faith, ſo by them its ſincerity is proved. This was the Apoſtle's rejoicing, the teſtimony of his conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, he had his converſation in the world. His perſuaſion, that there was laid up for him a crown of righteouſneſs, aroſe from a conſciouſneſs, that he had fought a good fight, and kept the faith. He exhorts Chriſtians to give diligence unto the full aſſurance of hope, and, for this purpoſe, to be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes.

(4.) Good works eſſentially belong to religion. They are binding upon us in the obvious reaſon of things, and by the expreſs command of God. That we ſhould honor and worſhip the great and glorious Creator, on whom we continually depend—that we ſhould be juſt, faithful and beneficent to our fellow men, with whom we are nearly connected—that we ſhould uſe the bounties of heaven with ſobriety and temperance—and that we ſhould bring our appetites and paſſions under the dominion of our reaſon, which is the ſuperior faculty of man, is naturally fit and right, and explicitly required in

the divine word. Nothing can remove or diminiſh our obligation to be ſuch manner of perſons in all our converſation: Leſt we ſhould imagine, that faith ſuperſedes this obligation, the goſpel gives it in charge, "that they who have believed in God ſhould be careful to maintain good works, becauſe they are profitable to men." The Apoſtle with abhorrence repels the ſuggeſtion, that Chriſtians, becauſe, they are under grace, may therefore continue in ſin; for, ſays he, "How ſhall they who are dead to ſin, live any longer therein?"

(5.) Works are neceſſary to adorn our profeſſions, and honor our religion before men. Chriſtians are exhorted to exhibit the virtues of the goſpel in their common converſation, that the word of God may not be blaſphemed, nor the way of truth evil ſpoken of; but, on the contrary, the enemies of religion, beholding in the profeſſors of it, a pattern of good works, may glorify God in the day of viſitation.

Laſtly: Works are neceſſary, as by them we are to be judged in the great day of the Lord. This is the conſtant doctrine of the goſpel, that Jeſus Chriſt, to whom all judgment is committed, will render to every man according to his works—according to the deeds done in the body. Though heaven is the purchaſe of Chriſt, yet it is promiſed only to them who ſeek it by a patient continuance in well doing. They only who do the commandments have right to enter into the holy city. Though the righteouſneſs of the Redeemer, and not our own, is the ground of our acceptance; yet, for the encouragement of virtue and holineſs, God aſſures us, that the future happineſs of believers will be meaſured out to them, in a greater or leſs degree, according as they have more or leſs abounded in works of righteouſneſs. "Let us therefore be ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, always abounding in the

work of the Lord, for as much as we know, that our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

III. Our laſt obſervation is, that the neceſſity of works does not diminiſh the grace of God in our ſalvation, nor afford us any pretence for boaſting.

The whole ſcheme of redemption originated in God's ſelf moving mercy. It was not the works or the prayers of men that brought Jeſus down from heaven; but the preventing grace and love of God that gave his Son to die for their ſins. It was not their ſagacity which diſcovered; but his wiſdom which revealed this glorious Savior, and the marvellous plan of ſalvation through him. It was not their will that fixed; but his ſovereign grace that ſtated the terms of ſalvation; and his promiſe is the foundation of our hope. Neither our faith, nor repentance, nor works can be conſidered as making atonement for paſt ſins: That our ſalvation ſtands in connexion with theſe terms, is owing wholly to the grace of God. It is of grace, that we are brought to a knowledge of, and faith in Jeſus, and are diſpoſed to the performance of works really good. "Faith is the gift of God." The means of faith are from him: The word of revelation is not our procurement, but his gracious beſtowment. It is by his kind influence, that we are excited to attend on the inſtructions of his word. It is his Spirit, that gives the word a ſaving power. "We are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works."—"By the grace of God," ſays St. Paul, "I am what I am." It is by the power of God, that we are kept through faith unto ſalvation. If we live, yet we live not by ourſelves, but Chriſt liveth in us. If we labor, it is not by our own power, but by the grace of God which is with us.

Our ſpiritual ſervices are acceptable only by Jeſus Chriſt, not by their own intrinſic worth. Were our works ever ſo perfect, yet between them and the reward promiſed to them, there is no proportion.

Therefore, though believers have their fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life, yet this is the gift of God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Humility eſſentially belongs to the Chriſtian temper. The believer perceives his own unworthineſs, and his dependence on the grace of God. —He knows he has no cauſe for boaſting, and he feels no diſpoſition to it. Where faith operates, the ſoul is humbled. So faith uſed to operate, and ſo it does ſtill. They who, on the apprehenſion of a title to ſalvation, are puffed up with pride in themſelves, and contempt of others, diſcover manifeſt ſigns of the want of goſpel faith.

2. The mighty preparation which God has made for our recovery from the ruins of the apoſtacy, teaches us, that the human race is of great importance in the ſcale of rational beings, and in the ſcheme of God's univerſal government. Though in ourſelves we are unworthy of God's notice, yet he has done much for us—more than we could have aſked—more than we can even think. He muſt, then, have ſome great deſigns to accompliſh by us. His glory is in ſome way or other to be wonderfully diſplayed in us. Let us now fall in with the deſign of his rich mercy and grace, leſt hereafter, we ſhould ſtand everlaſting monuments of his ireful juſtice, againſt perverſeneſs and ingratitude.

3. It infinitely concerns us to comply with the propoſals of the goſpel.

A ſalvation procured in the manner which the goſpel diſcovers, is great and important beyond all imagination. If we neglect this, proportionably great and awful will be our deſtruction. If without the grace here revealed, our ſtate would be wretched and hopeleſs: How dreadful muſt be the

condition of thoſe who reject this grace?—If he who ſinned againſt the law, fell under a ſentence of death, without any mercy promiſed him, How ſore will be the puniſhment of thoſe, who deſpiſe the grace and grieve the Spirit of God, and tread under foot the blood of a dying Savior?

4. Let no man flatter himſelf, that he is in a ſtate of ſalvation, as long as he lives in the neglect of good works.

Theſe are the fruits of that faith by which we are ſaved. If theſe are wanting, the root of the matter is not in us. The hope, comfort and joy, of Chriſtian profeſſors, muſt greatly depend on their care to maintain thoſe works, to which true believers are created, and which God has ordained that they ſhould walk in them. They who riſe to the joy of hope, on ſome tranſient religious exerciſes, before they have had opportunity to manifeſt their ſincerity, by the performance of religious duties, greatly diſhonor religion and dangerouſly impoſe on themſelves. And they who preſume to pronounce others in a converted ſtate, before their faith has appeared in its works, and their repentance in its fruits, it is to be feared often flatter deluded ſouls to their eternal deſtruction.

5. Let us be careful, that we miſtake not the nature of good works.

Works really good muſt proceed from a good principle—from a principle of faith. And as faith is a belief of the goſpel, ſo works flowing from it will be conformed to the goſpel. They will be accompanied with a correſpondent temper, regulated by the divine precepts, and produced by the influence of goſpel doctrines. If then we believe that we are God's workmanſhip, let us walk worthy of the Lord to all pleaſing, and abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt, unto the glory and praiſe of God.

SERMON XIII.

EPHESIANS ii. 11, 12.

Wherefore remember, that ye were in time paſſed Gentiles in the fleſh, who are called uncircumciſſion by that which is called the circumciſſion in the fleſh made by hands; that, at that time ye were without Chriſt, being aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world.

AS the Epheſian church conſiſted partly of Jews, and partly of Gentiles, the Apoſtle in this letter addreſſes himſelf ſometimes to the one, and ſometimes to the other ſeparately, and often to both jointly. The paſſage now read, he directs to the believers, who in time paſt were Gentiles in the fleſh." He ſays in the following words, "Ye, who ſometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt." In what reſpects they once were afar off, he explains, in the words choſen for our text. The following part of the chapter deſcribes their preſent nearneſs.

What is now before us is to ſhew, in what reſpects theſe Epheſians, before their converſion to the faith of Chriſt, were at a diſtance from God; and how the deſcription here given of their unhappy ſtate may be applied to ſinners under the goſpel.

I. The Apoſtle calls upon them to remember, that "they were in time paſt Gentiles in the fleſh."

He admoniſhes them not to forget the diſmal ſtate of Heatheniſm out of which they had lately been called; but often to reflect upon it with attention and ſerioufneſs, that they might ever maintain a humble ſenſe of their own unworthineſs, and awaken in their ſouls thankful and admiring apprehenſions of that grace which had wrought in them ſo glorious a change.

We are here taught that Chriſtians, who have been the favored ſubjects of God's renewing grace, ought to remember their former guilty condition, and the awful danger from which they have eſcaped. God ſays to Jeruſalem, after her happy reſtoration, "Thou ſhalt remember thy ways, and be aſhamed. I will eſtabliſh my covenant with thee, that thou mayeſt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more becauſe of thy ſhame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou haſt done." The Apoſtle Paul, after his converſion to the goſpel, frequently reviews, and deeply laments his former life, calling himſelf a blaſphemer, a perſecutor and chief of ſinners, and he acknowledges with grateful admiration, the mercy of God, which had revealed Chriſt in him, and put him into the goſpel miniſtry.

A recollection of former ſtupidity, impenitence and guilt keeps the Chriſtian humble and watchful, enlivens his gratitude to God, and warms his zeal in religion. He is not diſpoſed to exalt himſelf on account of the ſpiritual change, which, he hopes, has taken place in him: He is rather inclined to think others better than himſelf, being conſcious of greater vileneſs and guilt in himſelf, than he can diſcern in them. While he rejoices in the humble perſuaſion, that he is a new creature, he acknowledges, that by the grace of God he is what he is. He adores that grace, which has placed him

under the means of ſalvation, and rendered theſe means effectual to renew his heart. He takes no glory to himſelf, but lives by faith in that grace which has already formed him to a ſpiritual temper and life. They who, after a ſuppoſed converſion, forgetting what they once were, indulge a confidence in themſelves and a contempt of others, give ſad proofs, that their converſion is not from ſin to God, but only from ſtupidity to pride—from careleſſneſs to vain glory.

II. The Apoſtle reminds theſe Epheſian converts of that contempt, with which they once had been treated by the Jews. "Ye were called the uncircumciſion by that which is called the circumciſion in the fleſh made by hands."

When God choſe the ſeed of Abraham to be a peculiar people to himſelf, he inſtituted circumciſion as a ſeal of his covenant with them, a mark of diſtinction from heathens and idolaters, and a ſign of their high privileges and obligations. But the Jews, in the latter period of their national exiſtence, inſtead of improving this gracious diſtinction to humility, gratitude and obedience, perverted it to pride, ſelfconfidence and contempt of mankind. They gloried in themſelves as the ſeed of Abraham and the children of God, reprobated other nations as his enemies, treated them as unclean, and not only excluded them from the benefit of religious communion, but even denied them the common offices of humanity. And we find, that one of their greateſt objections againſt the goſpel, was, that it offered ſalvation to the Gentiles.

Hypocrites are apt to value themſelves upon their external privileges, and to confine ſalvation to themſelves and thoſe of their party and complexion. The ſincere Chriſtian values his external privileges as means of holineſs. He rejoices in them, not as what directly intitle him to heaven,

but as what, he hopes, may be the means of fitting him for heaven. Poſſeſſed of the benevolent Spirit of the goſpel, he wiſhes that others may enjoy the ſame privileges with himſelf. He chooſes to think, that there is much real godlineſs among thoſe who have never known all his advantages, or joined themſelves to his community. On ſuch he looks rather with compaſſion than contempt; and on himſelf, with concern rather than confidence. He admires the ſovereign grace of God, which has made him to differ, and he is ſolicitous ſo to improve the gracious diſtinction, that it may turn to his ſalvation—not to his condemnation.

III. The Apoſtle tells them, that, "at that time, they were without Chriſt."

To the Jews were chiefly confined the diſcoveries which God made of a Savior to come. From them, in their captivities and diſperſions, the Gentiles obtained that knowledge which they had of this wonderful and glorious perſon. The knowledge which they thus acquired, was imperfect, mixed with error and uncertainty, and at beſt, extended only to a few. The Jews, in the times near to Chriſt's appearance, had generally embraced the opinion, that the Meſſiah, in the character of a temporal prince, would erect a kingdom in *their* country, and give *them* dominion over the other nations of the earth. However *they* might glory in the expectation of ſuch a Savior, the Gentiles contemplating him in this character, would regard his appearance as a calamity, rather than a bleſſing. As the Gentiles in general had no knowledge of Chriſt, and what imitations were given them by the Jews, were uncertain and erroneous, the Apoſtle might truly ſay, "They were without Chriſt."

What think you of their condition?—Was it not exceedingly to be lamented?—How affecting muſt it be to this benevolent Apoſtle, to ſee whole nations—innumerable multitudes of intelligent and

immortal beings, involved in guilt and ruin, and ignorant of the only way of deliverance? Can you wonder, that he encountered ſo many dangers and deaths to ſpread among theſe poor Gentiles, the knowledge of the Redeemer's name? But let me aſk you, Why was this knowledge deſirable?—Was it not, that, by faith in him, and ſubmiſſion to him, they might obtain an intereſt in the great ſalvation which he has brought to a guilty world? You have the knowledge of Chriſt. To you his goſpel has come. But if you live in unbelief, what benefit do you expect from him?—What is your condition better than theirs?—You will ſay, "You are not in unbelief: You acknowledge, that Jeſus is a divine Savior, and his goſpel a divine revelation." Thus far is well. But have you ſubmitted to Chriſt as a Savior? Are you governed by his goſpel? If not, your faith is vain; it will never ſave you. When your faith is accompanied with repentance of ſin, and a purpoſe of new obedience; when it produces an habitual conformity of heart to the religion which Chriſt has taught, then you have believed to the ſalvation of your ſouls. Until you have ſuch a faith as this, you are as truly without Chriſt, as they who have never heard of him. If you think the condition of the heathens deplorable, becauſe they have not heard of Chriſt, how deplorable muſt be your condition, who have heard of him, and yet in heart reject him?—If they periſh, it may be pleaded in mitigation of their doom, that they knew not the way of deliverance. But for you who believe, that God has ſent his Son to redeem you, what excuſe can be urged, if ſtill you deſpiſe the ſalvation offered you?—That knowledge, which you think ſo diſtinguiſhing a privilege, will turn to your greater condemnation. Go then, humbly ſubmit to this Savior, and penitently rely on his atonement, and thus ſecure an intereſt in the ſalvation which

he has purchaſed, leſt you fall under a more awful doom, than they who are without the knowledge of him. Every day you live in impenitence, your condition is in ſome reſpects more dangerous than theirs, to whom the word of ſalvation has never been ſent.

IV. The Apoſtle farther obſerves, that theſe Epheſians were "aliens from the commonwealth of Iſrael."

To the Iſraelites pertained the ſervice of God. To the forms of worſhip inſtituted in the Moſaic law, none were admitted but Jews, and ſuch as were proſelyted to the Jewiſh religion. All uncircumciſed heathens were excluded as aliens. The Apoſtle ſays, verſe 14, "Chriſt has broken down the middle wall of partition, which was between us;" between Jews and Gentiles. He alludes to the partition wall in the temple, which ſeparated the court of the Gentiles from the holy place, into which the Jews might enter; but no alien could be admitted.

The goſpel has inſtituted a ſervice more pure and ſpiritual than that appointed by the law of Moſes; and all Chriſtians are a holy prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God, through Jeſus Chriſt. By his blood they have boldneſs to enter into the holieſt, in a new and living way.

Now if the Gentiles were unhappy in an excluſion from the ſervice of the Jewiſh ſanctuary, How guilty are they who exclude themſelves from the more excellent ſervice of the Chriſtian church? If they who were denied admiſſion to the ancient temple, were in ſo dangerous a caſe, How awful is the caſe of thoſe, who contemptuouſly turn away from goſpel ordinances, when their attendance is not only permitted, but required?

We have much ſtronger inducements to attend on the ſervice of God under the goſpel, than Gen-

tiles could have to join themſelves to the common-wealth of Iſrael. The Chriſtian ſervice is more ſimple and eaſy, more pure and ſpiritual, than the Jewiſh; ſucceſs is more ſurely promiſed; greater aſſiſtance is offered; richer bleſſings are exhibited; the interceſſion of an allprevailing Mediator is more expreſsly revealed.

If ſome of thoſe friends, with whom we mingle in our common employments and amuſements, were under an abſolute excluſion from the privilege of uniting in the devotions of the church, and attending on the means of knowledge and ſalvation, ſhould we not think them very unhappy?—Should we not look upon them with ſenſible pity and concern, whenever we met them? In the good providence of God, we are allowed this privilege. But how many deſpiſe it?—They who will not uſe a privilege when they have it, are not at all the better for it. Their condition is no happier, than if they never had received it: Nay; it is more—far more guilty and wretched. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of thoſe, who put from them the word of God, as judging themſelves unworthy of eternal life, and bringing on their ſouls a wonderful deſtruction.

V. The Apoſtle adds: "They were ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe."

A covenant, in common acceptation, is an agreement between two parties, in which a promiſe is made by the one, on certain conditions to be performed by the other. God's dealings with men are called by this name in alluſion to ſuch uſages among them. Though there is not an exact ſimilarity in all points, yet there is a reſemblance in this main point, that we become entitled to promiſed bleſſings by a compliance with required conditions. But then, it ſhould be remembered, whatever the conditions are, they in no ſenſe *deſerve* the bleſſings; nor are they performed by our own independent ability; nor is the conſent to perform

them, optional, as in human covenants: But the bleſſings promiſed are gifts from God—the conditions required are performed by grace derived from him—and the whole plan of the covenant is conſtituted for us by his wiſdom, and enjoined upon us by his authority.

It is obſervable; the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of *covenants*, more than one. So in Romans ix. 4. He ſays, "To the Jews belonged the *covenants*. He probably refers to the covenant with Abraham, which becauſe it was ſeveral times renewed and promulged, may be called *The Covenants*.

This was eminently a covenant of *promiſe*. It contained that great and glorious promiſe, which is the ſubſtance of the goſpel, that the Lord would be a God to him and to his ſeed, through that Savior, in whom all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed. This covenant with Abraham was repeated to Iſaac and to Jacob; and afterward proclaimed to the nation of the Jews; it was illuſtrated and explained by the prophets, and ſtill more fully diſplayed and confirmed by the goſpel. This was properly the covenant of grace; and it embraced all believers of all nations, as well as the natural deſcendants of Abraham. "As many as are of the faith are bleſſed with faithful Abraham." "They who are Chriſt's, are Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe." "The bleſſing of Abraham," that God would be a God to him and his ſeed, "is come on the Gentiles through Jeſus Chriſt."

Now the Apoſtle obſerves, that the Gentiles were ſtrangers to this covenant of promiſe. The diſcovery of it, until the Savior came, was almoſt wholly confined to the Jews. How unhappy was the condition of the Gentile world, in thoſe dark and benighted ages, which preceded the goſpel! They knew the judgment of God, that ſinners like them, were worthy of death; but knew not the way

of pardon and peace. They had only a general apprehenſion of God's goodneſs, not any expreſs promiſe, on which to ground their hope. Moſt of them had ſuch abſurd notions of the divine character, and ſuch faint conceptions of futurity, that they ſunk down into an unfeeling ſtupidity. "They walked in the vanity of their mind, having their underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them becauſe of the blindneſs of their hearts, and being paſt feeling, gave themſelves over to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs."

Happy are we in a full diſcovery of the covenant of grace. In the goſpel which is come to us, the bleſſings of pardon and eternal life, are more expreſsly promiſed, and that faith and repentance, which are the conditions of thoſe bleſſings, are more clearly ſtated, than they were in former diſpenſations. And if we, who are acquainted with the terms and the promiſes of the covenant, finally reject them, our caſe will be far more wretched than theirs who were ſtrangers to them. "It had been better for us not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us." Let us then flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope ſet before us." I proceed to obſerve,

"VI. The Gentiles are ſaid to "have had no hope." They had no clear and diſtinct hope of a future exiſtence.

"Many of them ſcarcely believed, or even thought of a life beyond this. They had no apprehenſion, hardly the idea of a reſtoration of the body. Thoſe who believed a future ſtate, had but obſcure, and, ſome of them, very abſurd conceptions of it. Still more ignorant were they, of the qualifications neceſſary for happineſs after death. Some diſcovery of theſe important matters was made by the Jewiſh

revelation; but it is by the goſpel only, that life and immortality are brought to light.

This elucidates and confirms the arrangements, which reaſon ſuggeſts, in favor of a future ſtate; ſuch as the preſent unequal diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments; our natural capacity for higher improvements than our condition in this world will permit; the impoſſibility that ſuch as die young ſhould ever anſwer the purpoſes of a rational exiſtence, unleſs they exiſt in another ſtate; the ardent deſire of immortality which is implanted in every breaſt, and which ſenſibly operates in all, except where it is overpowered by corrupt principles and vicious habits. And beſides theſe; it has made explicit declarations and promiſes of the reſurrection of the body and a future exiſtence, and confirmed them by a plain, obvious fact, the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, and a teacher ſent from him.

It has not only taught us in general, that there will be another life, but has informed us of many important circumſtances relating to it; particularly, that, in ſome unknown period of duration, there will be an end of the human ſucceſſion, and of the probationary exiſtence of mankind—that then will commence a general judgment of the world—that unto this judgment will be brought every work of man, with every ſecret thing—that rewards and puniſhments will be diſpenſed according to men's different characters, and proportioned to their different degrees of holineſs, or wickedneſs—that, in the concluſion of the judgment, the wicked will go away into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal.

We have now a glorious hope ſet before us. Guilty and unworthy as we are, we may be reconciled unto God by the death, and ſaved by the life of Jeſus. So rich and extenſive is the grace revealed in the goſpel, that a conſciouſneſs of paſt

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guilt is no juſt ground of diſcouragement to thoſe who feel the workings of godly ſorrow, and the reſolutions of new obedience. "The righteouſneſs of God, through the faith of Chriſt is unto all, and upon all them who believe, and there is no difference."

Do we think with compaſſion and concern on the caſe of thoſe, who know not the way of peace, and have no hope?—Let us not then deſpiſe the glorious hope propoſed to us, but receive it with thankfulneſs and joy. In a way of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the goſpel ſets before us the hope of a glorious immortality; but if we continue in unbelief and impenitence, we can have no part in the matter. Are there not many, who, if they were to ſpeak ſeriouſly, muſt confeſs, that by the terms of the goſpel, they are excluded from the bleſſedneſs propoſed? Will you live, as the Gentiles formerly lived, without hope? Will you put yourſelves in a condition worſe than theirs, when you enjoy ſo high advantages? Will you turn the means of hope into occaſions of preſent guilt and future deſpair? Lay hold on this hope, while it is within your reach—Seek for eternal life by a patient continuance in well doing—Give diligence to the full aſſurance of hope to the end—Be not ſlothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes.

VII. The laſt character of theſe Gentiles is, that "they were without God in the world." They were Atheiſts in a world, in which God was manifeſt.

The Heathens generally had ſome apprehenſion of a Deity; but they were without a knowledge of the one true God, and without a juſt idea of his character. They did ſervice to them, who by nature were no gods; or, if they knew ſomething of God, yet "they glorified him not as God, neither

were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and changed the truth of God into a lie, and worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed forever."

To us, who have been early taught the exiſtence and government of one Supreme, all Perfect Being, nothing is more unaccountable, than the atheiſm and idolatry, which have appeared in the world. To us it is aſtoniſhing, that any ſhould deny the exiſtence of an eternal, independent power, and aſcribe to chance and fate all the things which we behold; and no leſs aſtoniſhing, that any ſhould imagine the godhead to be like unto gold and ſilver and ſtone, graven by art and man's device.

But while we condemn the atheiſt and the idolater, let us take heed leſt we alſo fall under the ſame condemnation. Many, who profeſs to know God, in works deny him. Many, who would not kneel to a graven image, or proſtrate themſelves before the riſing ſun, ſtill ſerve the creature more than the Creator, love mammon more than God, and are governed more by their own luſts than by his will.

However clearly you can demonſtrate the exiſtence and providence of God, and whatever rational ſentiments you entertain concerning his character and government; if you ſeek not his favor with your whole heart, and in preference to every worldly intereſt—if you forget him in your ordinary concerns, and acknowledge him not in your daily wants and ſupplies—if you neglect to maintain communion with him by mediation, thankſgiving and prayer—if you indulge a temper, and purſue a courſe, contrary to his will; you are as really, as the atheiſt, without God in the world. While you condemn thoſe, who, in contradiction to the plaineſt evidence, ſay, there is no God, How will you juſtify yourſelves, who in contra-

diction to your own belief, live as if there were no God?

There are more atheiſts in the world, than profeſs themſelves ſuch. "The tranſgreſſion of the wicked ſaith, There is no fear of God before his eyes." How unaccountable is the ſtupidity of ſinners! God is not far from them: He loads them with bleſſings, ſatisfies them with good, fills them with gladneſs; yet they know him not, or will not regard him. *This* God calls the heavens to behold with aſtoniſhment: "I have nouriſhed and brought up children, but they have rebelled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib; but Iſrael doth not know—my people doth not conſider. Who hath heard ſuch a thing? Hath a nation changed her gods, which yet are no gods? But my people hath changed their glory for that which doth not profit. They have forſaken me, the fountain of living water, and have hewed them out broken ciſterns, which can hold no water."

Let us lament the atheiſm and idolatry of our own hearts. Since we know God, let us glorify him as God, by thankfulneſs and obedience. Let us, by the diſcoveries of his character made before our eyes, and the exerciſes of his goodneſs which we daily experience, be perſuaded to preſent ourſelves living ſacrifices, holy and acceptable to him; for this is our reaſonable ſervice.

SERMON XIV.

EPHESIANS ii. 13——18.

But now in Chriſt Jeſus, ye who ſometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having aboliſhed in his fleſh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himſelf of twain one new man, ſo making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the croſs, having ſlain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh; for through him we both have an acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father.

IN the preceding verſes, the Apoſtle reminds the Gentile believers in Epheſus, in what reſpects they had formerly lived at a diſtance from God. They were Gentiles in the fleſh—they were by Jews deſpiſed, as not having the mark and ſign of God's people—they were without the knowledge of Chriſt—they were excluded from the privilege of worſhipping God in his ſanctuary—they were ſtrangers to the gracious promiſe of the covenant—they had no ſure hope of a future life—and they were without God in the world.

In the words now read, he deſcribes that happy ſtate of nearneſs to God, into which they were brought by the goſpel. "He ſays, verſe 13, "Ye who ſometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt." The circumſtances of this nearneſs he diſtinctly illuſtrates in the following words, which we will now open and apply.

I. They were brought within *the church of God*, and admitted to equal privileges with his ancient people the Jews.

The ſeed of Abraham were the people, whom God choſe, and whom he cauſed to approach near to himſelf. To them he ſhewed his ſtatutes and his judgments; he dealt not ſo with any other nation. The Gentiles he left afar off from him.—"But now," ſays the Apoſtle, "*theſe* are made nigh in Chriſt," as well as the Jews. "Chriſt is our peace." He has made a peace—a union between Jews and Gentiles. "He has made both to be one." He has formed them into one church, and given them an equal ſhare in goſpel privileges, ſo that one has no preeminence above the other.—Chriſt ſays, "I lay down my life for the ſheep;" not merely for thoſe of the ancient fold; "for I have other ſheep, which are not of this fold: Them alſo I muſt bring, and they ſhall hear my voice, and there ſhall be one fold and one ſhepherd."

"He has broken down the middle wall of partition which was between us." He has aboliſhed the ceremonial law, which was a wall of ſeparation between Jews and other nations. The Apoſtle alludes to the wall in the temple, which divided the court of the Gentiles from the holy place, where the Jews were allowed to worſhip. On this wall, Joſephus ſays, it was written, "that no alien might go through it."

The Apoſtle adds, "Chriſt hath aboliſhed in his fleſh the enmity, even the law of commandments, conſiſting in ordinances, to make in himſelf of two

the new man, ſo making peace" between them.—That which made the enmity, or ſeparation between Jews and Gentiles was the law of ceremonies and ordinances; for theſe were peculiar to the Jews:—Uncircumciſed Gentiles were not admitted to them. *Theſe* Chriſt has aboliſhed in his fleſh. The great intention of them was to prefigure Chriſt's ſufferings in the fleſh for the ſins of the world. When he offered himſelf on the croſs, he aboliſhed theſe ordinances as being no longer of uſe, and thus removed the enmity, or the occaſion of diſtinction between Jews and Gentiles. So the Apoſtle ſays in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians. "He hath made peace through the blood of the croſs, and hath blotted out the hand writing of ordinances, which was againſt us" Gentiles, "and hath taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the croſs."

As the death of Chriſt was deſigned alike for the benefit of all nations, ſo when he removed the law of ceremonies given to the Jews, he inſtituted a more ſimple way of worſhip, which ſhould be common to Gentiles, as well as Jews. As he made no diſtinction between them in the deſign of his death, ſo he would allow none to be made in regard of the privileges of his worſhip; but would reconcile both in one body.

You here ſee, and you ought to remember, that one great deſign of Chriſt's death was to aboliſh former diſtinctions, to unite all nations in one church, and to create in himſelf one new man, ſo making peace. He has purchaſed the church with his blood, and his church is one. Though, for the convenience of worſhip, it may be divided into many members, ſtill it is one body in him. He is the head of the church, and the Savior of the body.

Hence it follows, that all contentions, diviſions and ſeparations in the church of Chriſt, are a direct oppoſition to the deſign of his death. As the mem-

bers of a particular church ought to walk together in peace, ſo particular churches ſhould maintain communion with one another. They ſhould cooperate in building up the great kingdom of their common Lord, until they all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. Chriſtians may entertain different opinions in the leſs important doctrines of the goſpel, and may practice different uſages in the worſhip of God; but as long as they hold the head, on which all the members depend, and as long as they call on the name of the ſame Lord Jeſus Chriſt, they ſhould regard and treat each other as fellow members in him.

Moſt of the Churches planted by the Apoſtles, conſiſted both of Jews and Gentiles. Theſe, having been differently educated, and ſtill retaining ſome of their ancient habits, often fell into troubleſome contentions. But in theſe caſes Paul always inculcated forbearance, condeſcenſion and charity.—— While he required the churches to purge out the openly wicked and ungodly, he cautioned believers not to judge and condemn one another for circumſtantial differences, and exhorted them, wherein they were agreed, to walk by the ſame rule.

If we ſeparate from the communion of our brethren for differences, which enter not into the eſſence of religion; or if we renounce fellowſhip with particular churches, which ſtill, we have reaſon to hope, Chriſt has owned and bleſſed, we not only oppoſe the plain inſtructions of the goſpel, but counteract one great deſign of Chriſt's death, which was to deſtroy all enmity, and reconcile his diſciples in one body.

It is the duty of all Chriſtians to excite one another to love and good works, and to unite in advancing the common intereſt of pure religion.—— They are to ſeek, not merely their own profit, but

the profit of many. They are not only to conſult, each one his own perſonal edification; but to ſtudy the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith they may edify one another.

II. Theſe Epheſians were brought near to God, as they were admitted to enjoy the *goſpel*, which is a diſpenſation of grace and peace.

The Apoſtle ſays, "Chriſt came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that are near." Chriſt came to the *Epheſians*, not perſonally, but by the miniſtry of his Apoſtles, and preached pardon and ſalvation to them, as well as to the *Jews*.

If it is a happineſs to enjoy peace with God, it is a privilege to hear it proclaimed, its nature explained, and its terms propoſed. "Bleſſed are the people, who know the joyful ſound."——"How beautiful are the feet of him, that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth peace, that bringeth glad tidings of good, that publiſheth ſalvation, that ſaith unto Zion, Thy king reigneth."

As the Jews were ſaid to be near to God, becauſe to them pertained the giving of the law and the ſervice of the ſanctuary; ſo theſe Gentiles were now ſaid to be made nigh, becauſe to them was preached the goſpel of peace, and the offer of ſalvation through a Redeemer.

If *they* were near to God in the enjoyment of Paul's miniſtry, we alſo are near; for to us are committed the truths taught by his miniſtry. The doctrines which the Apoſtles preached, are contained in their writings. *Theſe*, through the good Providence of God, are in our poſſeſſion: We may conſult them in the hours of retirement; we may hear them opened and applied in the ſanctuary of God. We need not ſay, "Who ſhall aſcend into heaven, to bring Chriſt down from above? Or, Who ſhall deſcend into the deep, to bring Chriſt up from the dead?"

—For the word is nigh us, even that ſame word of ſalvation which Chriſt preached, firſt in his own perſon, and then by the miniſtry of his Apoſtles. —We are the people, who know the joyful ſound, and to whom peace through Jeſus Chriſt is proclaimed. God has brought us near to himſelf, to do his ſervice in the tabernacle. He has ſent to us the goſpel of his Son: In the midſt of us he has eſtabliſhed his churches: We are invited to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

Our high privileges are not the effects of our own previous choice, but of God's ſovereign grace. He has revealed to us thoſe glorious things, which are hidden from millions of our fellow ſinners.—Why is it ſo?—We can only ſay, "So it ſeemed good in his ſight."

Let us remember, however, that to whom much is given, of them much will be required. The nearer we are brought to God, the farther ſhall we be baniſhed from him, if we deſpiſe his grace. So our Lord ſays to Capernaum, in which he often preached and did works; "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, ſhalt be caſt down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. Therefore it ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

III. Among theſe Epheſians, many were brought near to God by the *renovation of their ſouls* after his image.

The Apoſtle ſays to them, "In Chriſt ye are made nigh, for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath aboliſhed the enmity, to make in himſelf of twain one *new man*."

It was the deſign of the goſpel, not only to unite Jews and Gentiles in one church, but to make them *new men*, that they might walk *in newneſs of life*.—

Accordingly the Apoſtle, in the 4th chapter, obſerves, that "they had been taught, as the truth is in Jeſus, that they ſhould put off, concerning their former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts, ſhould be renewed in the ſpirit of their mind, and ſhould put on the *new man*, which, after God, is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs." The old man ſignifies thoſe evil habits which they had long indulged in their Heatheniſm. The new man is that life of holineſs and righteouſneſs which the goſpel requires. This is called *true* holineſs, and a *renewal* of the ſpirit, in diſtinction from thoſe outward forms in which Jews, as well as Heathens, had once reſted.

Now, when we are renewed in the ſpirit of the mind, and made holy in the hidden man of the heart, then we are brought near to God. All habitual ſinners, how near ſoever in their viſible privileges, are in their hearts far from him. They have in them a carnal mind, which is enmity againſt God, and will not be ſubject to his law. They are enemies in their minds by wicked works. They may profeſs to know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable and diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. But true Chriſtians are nigh to God, as they are partakers of his nature, renewed after his image, and conformed to his character.

If the enjoyment of the goſpel brings us near to God, the efficacy of the goſpel on our ſouls brings us nearer ſtill; for this aſſimilates us to him. We may be near to him in external privileges, and yet be far off in the diſpoſition of our minds. There are thoſe, who draw near to God with their mouths, when their hearts are far from him. If we not only profeſs the word of truth, but are born of this incorruptible ſeed—this word, which liveth and abideth for ever, and have purified our ſouls in

obeying the truth; then we may properly be ſaid to be made nigh to God. "While we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowſhip with him."—"When we dwell in love, we dwell in God and he in us, for he is love."

Let us not content ourſelves with a profeſſed and viſible nearneſs to God, but ſeek a ſpiritual union with him in a participation of the divine nature.—Let us walk with him in the exerciſe of faith and love, in the contemplation of his perfections, in a ſenſe of his preſence, and in the obſervance of his commands. When we are renewed in the ſpirit of the mind and walk in newneſs of life, we may be ſaid to come nigh to God; for then we are like him, and enjoy communion with him.

IV. This nearneſs to God farther implies a ſtate of *peace with him.*

The Apoſtle here ſpeaks, not only of a reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles, but of a reconciliation of both unto God. "Chriſt hath aboliſhed the enmity, that he might make in himſelf of twain one new man——and that he might *reconcile both unto God* in one body by the croſs."

As ſinners are enemies to God in their minds, ſo they are objects of his holy diſpleaſure. "He is angry with them every day." And his "ſalvation is far from them." They ſay unto God, "Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways." And a ſentence, correſponding with this language of their hearts, is prepared for them;—"Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I know you not." But when they return to God by repentance, then his anger is turned away, and the ſentence is revoked. When their enmity is ſlain, and their ſelf exalting thoughts are humbled, then God receives them graciouſly and loves them freely; he is merciful to their unrighteouſneſs, and remembers their ſins no more. "Being juſtified by faith, they have peace with God through Jeſus

Chriſt." They are intereſted in that gracious promiſe, "I will be a God and a Father to you; and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters."—"There is no condemnation to them, becauſe they are in Chriſt Jeſus, and they walk not after the fleſh, but after the Spirit."

This reconciliation is effected "by the blood of Chriſt ſhed on the croſs."—"The chaſtiſement of our peace was laid on him."—"He ſuffered for our ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God." And "God makes us accepted in the beloved."—"He is in Chriſt reconciling the world to himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes." Happy is the believer thus brought near unto God.——

Bleſſed is the man, whoſe tranſgreſſions are thus forgiven, and his ſins covered. Bleſſed is the man, to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whoſe ſpirit there is no guile." He looks back with aſtoniſhment on his former ſtate of eſtrangement from God, and on the falſe ſecurity which he felt, while all his ſins were unpardoned, and his guilty ſoul expoſed to eternal condemnation. He meditates with thankful admiration on the mercy of God, which has brought him within the ſound of the goſpel, has awakened his attention to the danger of his condition and to the relief provided, and has given him repentance and the remiſſion of ſins. He views with delight the face of a reconciled God, and finds pleaſure in the conſciouſneſs of a heart reconciled to him. He looks forward with the joy of hope to that day, when he ſhall be admitted ſtill nearer to God, and ſhall mingle with ſaints and angels in his preſence, where is fulneſs of joy and pleaſures for ever more.

V. Another circumſtance of the nearneſs mentioned in the text, is *acceſs to God* in Prayer.——Through Chriſt reconciling us to God, *we both have acceſs unto the Father.*"

residence with humble believers. They are habitation—his temples. They walk in him, are led by him. By him they are ſanctified, ſtreng ened and comforted. He helps their infirmitie prayer, witneſſes to their adoption, and preſer them unto ſalvation. Chriſt ſays to his diſcip "If any man love me, him will my Father lo and we will come and make our abode with hi This ſpake he of the Spirit, which the Father wo ſend in his name.

Happy is the good Chriſtian in this nearneſ God. Senſible of his own weakneſs, he rejoice Chriſt, in whom all fulneſs dwells, and of wh fulneſs he may receive even grace for grace. P when he felt his weakneſs, found himſelf ſtrong He took pleaſure in infirmities, becauſe the po of Chriſt reſted upon him:—He was contented every ſtate:—He knew both how to be abaſed, how to abound:—Through Chriſt ſtrengthen him he could do all things. When he was cru fied with Chriſt, he was ſtill alive, becauſe Ch lived in him. He acknowledged, that by G grace he was made what he was; and he could the grace beſtowed on him was not in vain. labored the more abundantly; yet not he, but grace of Chriſt that was with him.

To judge then, whether we have the Spirit dw ing in us, we muſt inquire, Whether the *work* the Spirit can be found in us. Paul labored bundantly—was conſtant in duty—contente every condition—humble in his thoughts of himſ —We then have the beſt proof, that the grace God is with us, when we can trace its happy fects.

I have now opened to you the ſeveral circu ſtances of that nearneſs to God, which the Apo mentions as the high privilege of humble Ch tians.

The firſt and leading circumſtances of this nearneſs we all enjoy. God's houſe and worſhip, his word and ordinances are nigh us. From our childhood we have known the holy ſcriptures, which are able to make us wiſe to ſalvation. Let us give glory to God, who thus has diſtinguiſhed us from multitudes of our fellow creatures. Let us not, however, content ourſelves with ſuch a nearneſs as this; but improve our favorable condition to a ſtill greater and more important nearneſs. We may be made nigh in reſpect of privileges, and yet remain in our hearts afar off from God. It concerns us to examine, whether we are partakers of God's holineſs, conformed to his will, reconciled to his government, and intereſted in his pardoning grace.—If we are enemies in our minds, it concerns us immediately to renounce our enmity, and accept that glorious peace, which is purchaſed by the Son of God.

Let us praiſe God for the interpoſition of his Son, who is our peace. His death on the croſs is the foundation of our habitual nearneſs to God, our actual approaches to him, and our comfortable hopes of the future enjoyment of him. He ſuffered for our ſins, that he might bring us to God.—He took on him *our* nature, that we might partake of the *divine*. In our nature he aſcended to heaven, that we might follow him thither. He appears in the preſence of God for us, that we may draw near in the full aſſurance of faith.

Let none deſpiſe the word diſpenſed, and the ordinances adminiſtered in the church. Theſe are the means by which believers come near to God, receive the communications of his grace, and obtain a preparation for glory. However lightly ſome may eſteem theſe means, pious ſouls find them highly uſeful to warm their holy affections, ſtrengthen their good reſolutions, improve their virtuous tempers, and bring them nearer to heaven.

Let none imagine, that they are above the need of divine ordinances; nor yet let any ſuppoſe, that religion mainly conſiſts in the obſervance of them: but let all regard them as the means of holineſs, and attend upon them, with a view to bring their ſouls nearer to God in the love of his character, and in the practice of every duty.

Our ſubject inſtructs us, when we may be ſaid to enjoy God's preſence in religious worſhip. It is, when we draw near to him in ſuch a manner, that the true end of worſhip is anſwered—when a holy temper is increaſed, holy reſolutions confirmed, an averſion to ſin ſtrengthened, and faith and humility promoted. It is not merely the elevation of affection in God's worſhip, which indicates his preſence with us: A better proof is the correſpondence of our hearts to the deſign of his worſhip, which is the promotion of knowledge, faith, holineſs, charity, heavenlineſs, and conſtancy in duty. —In a word, when we find, that God's ordinances make us better, we may conclude that we have been with him.

How great is the evil of ſin! It is this which ſeparates the ſoul from God. In nearneſs to him conſiſts the felicity of rational beings: Diſtance from him is their miſery;—all pretences to happineſs are vain, while man is a ſtranger to God. Let him be ſurrounded with all the riches, honors and joys that the world can give; ſtill, if he is far from God, he is far from happineſs. He who is without God, has no hope. Do the ſenſual and profane boaſt of pleaſures, when God is not in all their thoughts?—How vain are theſe pleaſures! How unſatisfying—how tranſient! In the moment of death they will vaniſh for ever, and leave the ſoul overwhelmed with ſorrow.

Let us be afraid of every thing that tends to draw us away from God; and love every thing, which brings us nearer to him. Let us ſeek him

h our whole hearts; preserve daily communion
h him; choose his favor as our happiness, his
vice as our employment, his word as our guide,
ordinances as our refreshment, his house as
gate of heaven, and heaven as our eternal
me.



SERMON XV.

EPHESIANS ii. 19——22.

Now therefore ye are no more ſtrangers, but fellow citizens with the Saints and of the houſehold of God, and are built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner ſtone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom you alſo are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

THESE Epheſian Gentiles, as the Apoſtle obſerves, had in times paſt been aliens from the commonwealth or citizenſhip of Iſrael, ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, without Chriſt, and afar off from God. But by the goſpel there was a great change made in their condition. They were brought near to God, and the enmity between the Jews and them was aboliſhed by the blood of the croſs, ſo that both were now reconciled to God in one body, and were become one new man. "Therefore," ſays the Apoſtle in the text, "ye are no more ſtrangers and foreigners," as ye were formerly, "but fellow citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God."

He deſcribes the Chriſtian church as a *city* or *houſehold*—He teaches us the nature of that *founda-*

tion on which the building ſtands—He ſignifies that the building, for its performance and ſecurity, muſt be *united* to the foundation—and, finally, that it may grow into an holy temple, and become an habitation of God; all the parts muſt be *framed* into, and *incorporated* with one another.

I. The Apoſtle repreſents the church of God under the figure of a *city*, and a *houſehold*.

1. A church muſt reſemble a family or city, in reſpect of *order* and *government*; for without theſe a religious ſociety can no more ſubſiſt, than a civil community, or a houſehold.

In a city there muſt be laws to regulate the manners of the citizens, and officers to publiſh and adminiſter the laws. So it muſt be in the church of God. The laws of this ſacred community are immediately inſtituted by God himſelf; and by him officers are appointed to explain theſe laws, inculcate obedience to them, reprove the violations of them, and hold up to general view the ſolemn ſanctions annexed to them. Though he does not directly indigitate the *perſons*, who are to act as officers in his church, yet he has preſcribed the neceſſary qualifications for, and the mode of introduction to the inſtituted office, and without a regular call and induction, no man has a right to aſſume a ſacred, any more than a civil function. As in a civil community every appointment to office muſt be agreeable to the conſtitution; ſo in the church, every appointment muſt be agreeable to the goſpel, which is the great charter of its privileges. If in a ſtate every man, who pleaſed, might uſurp the powers of magiſtracy, and demand obedience from his fellow citizens, there would be nothing but riot and confuſion: So it would be in the church, if every perſon, at his option, might officiate as a public ruler or teacher. In this caſe, a church would reſemble *Babel*, rather than a well regulated city. Officers in Chriſt's church are to

act, not as having dominion over the faith and conſcience, but as being helpers of the knowledge and comfort of their fellow Chriſtians. They are to apply the threatenings, and, in ſome caſes, the cenſures of Chriſt their Lord, for the conviction and reformation of the unruly; but they are not to act as Lords, over Chriſt's heritage: Whatever authority they have, they are to uſe it only for edification, not for deſtruction.

Now as God has inſtituted government in his church, for the promotion of holineſs and good works, ſo to this government every one is bound to ſubmit. What would you think of a man, who ſhould profeſs himſelf a citizen of the ſtate, and yet ſhould claim an exemption from its juriſdiction?—Juſt the ſame muſt you think of a man, who profeſſes to be a Chriſtian, and yet lives at large, without ſubjecting himſelf to the diſcipline of any Chriſtian church.

There are thoſe who pretend to believe the goſpel, and who have much to ſay about the church, and yet never own themſelves ſubject to Chriſt's authority in it. They never have explicitly covenanted to walk in communion with this, or that, or any other church of Chriſt. They conſider themſelves as totally exempt from Chriſtian juriſdiction. Now why is not this as great an inconſiſtency in the religious, as the ſame conduct would be in the civil life. The truth is, every man who believes the goſpel, is bound to ſubmit to all its plain inſtitutions; and ſince Chriſt has ordained, that his diſciples ſhall unite in ſocieties for mutual watchfulneſs, edification and comfort, every man is obliged to comply with this inſtitution, by walking in fellowſhip with ſome Chriſtian church. And they who imagine, they are not under the ſame obligations as others, or are not ſubjects of Chriſtian diſcipline equally with others, becauſe they never have joined themſelves to any particu-

lar church, ſhould conſider, that they have no right to live in this looſe and diſconnected manner, and therefore their excuſe is of no avail.

2. In a city, or houſehold, all the members have a mutual relation, and partake in the common privileges; and, though they are placed in different ſtations and conditions, they muſt all contribute to the general happineſs. So Chriſtians are called fellow citizens, brethren, and members one of another. They are all related to the ſame univerſal parent, who is above all, through all, and in them all. They dwell in the ſame houſe, the church, meet at the ſame table, and eat of the ſame bread. They ſhould therefore regard one another as brethren, feel for each other's welfare, and, according to their reſpective abilities, promote the general edification and comfort.

3. In a city, and alſo in a family, there is a common intereſt. Though each member has certain ſeparate rights, yet there are ſome great concerns, which belong to the whole, and which are the object of the union. So it is in the church of Chriſt. We are called into this ſacred kind of ſociety, that we may be fellow helpers in the ſame great deſign, the promotion of religion and the common ſalvation. Every Chriſtian, in his private capacity, is to work out his own ſalvation; but, as a member of the church, he is to regard the ſalvation of others. The goſpel directs us to conſider one another, that we may provoke unto love and good works—to ſtudy the things wherewith one may edify another—to ſeek not merely our own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved.

As all the members of a particular church ſhould cooperate in advancing her ſpiritual intereſt, ſo all churches ſhould concur in building up the common intereſts of Chriſt's kingdom. A particular member is never to diſturb the peace, and

obſtruct the edification of the church, under pretence of perſonal edification: Neither ought a collection of Chriſtians to take ſuch meaſures for building up themſelves, as tend to the diſquietude or diſſolution of other churches. But all ſhould act as fellow citizens in one grand community, and as brethren in one affectionate family. The common edification is one principal end of ſocial worſhip; and for this end every Chriſtian ought to attend upon it, even though he ſhould find but little benefit accrue to himſelf.

If a member of civil ſociety ſhould renounce every uſeful employment, and give himſelf up to pleaſure or indolence, becauſe he had acquired a fortune adequate to all his own exigences, he would be thought unworthy the name of a good citizen. We ſhould tell him, Whatever affluence he enjoyed, he was bound to employ his abilities for the benefit of his fellow citizens; and he had no right to live merely to himſelf. So if a profeſſor of religion ſhould diſcontinue his ſupport of, or attendance on the ſocial worſhip of God, under pretence of ſuch ſuperior religious attainments, as raiſed him above the need of public inſtruction, he would forfeit the character of a good Chriſtian; for every one is bound to conſult the common edification, as well as his own.

4. In a well ordered city, or houſehold, there will be peace and unity: So there ought to be in a Chriſtian church. Neither a civil, nor a religious community can long ſubſiſt, when it is divided againſt itſelf. Chriſtians are therefore required to ſtudy the things which make for peace—to forbear one another in love—to be like minded one toward another, that they may with one mind and one mouth, glorify God.

The Apoſtle, having compared the Chriſtian church to a houſe, continues the alluſion by repreſenting, in the ſecond place,

. The *manner* in which it is *founded*. As every ding must have a basis on which to rest; so wise, must the church of God. "This," our stle says, "is built on the foundation of the stles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being chief corner stone."

he mediation of Christ is the foundation of our and hope. The apostles and prophets are a dation only as they describe and exhibit to us doctrines and works, the atonement and inter- on of the Redeemer. In him all the doctrines ie prophets and apostles meet and unite, as the es in a foundation are fixed and bound togeth- y the corner stone. The Apostle Peter, allud- o the words of Isaiah, says, "Coming unto ist as to a living stone, chosen of God, and pre- s, be ye as living stones, built up a spiritual se; as it is contained in the scriptures, Behold in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, he that believeth shall not be confounded. you who believe, he is precious, but to the bedient the stone which the builders disallow- become the head of the corner, a stone of ibling, and a rock of offence." St. Paul says ie Corinthians, "According to the grace of given unto me, I have laid the foundation," preaching Christ to you, "for other founda- can no man lay than that is laid, which is s Christ."

lankind are by the gospel considered as in a n and ruined state. The great design of this lation is to bring the happy tidings and pro- ls of salvation to a guilty world. It opens the ious plan, and states the gracious terms of this ation. But then it always teaches us to regard s Christ, as the foundation of our faith and e. It is by his death that pardon and life are haſed. It is by his mediation that free access to God ocured. It is by his intercession that our fervent

prayers find audience, and our beſt works meet acceptance. The prophets laid the foundation of faith by the diſcoveries which they made of this glorious Savior. The apoſtles have laid a foundation by preaching the ſame Savior. "We preach not ourſelves," ſays St. Paul, "but Chriſt Jeſus, the Lord, and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus' ſake."

The church of God is built on thoſe doctrines, which reſpect Chriſt. This is not a civil community incorporated for worldly purpoſes; but a religious ſociety united for ſpiritual ends. Not a temporal intereſt, but an everlaſting ſalvation is the real object of its inſtitution. And as this ſalvation is purchaſed by, and offered through Jeſus Chriſt, ſo the very idea of a Chriſtian church ſuppoſes a belief of thoſe doctrines which mark the way of ſalvation, and a reliance on thoſe promiſes which inſure a title to it.

It is not every error in doctrine, that will deſtroy the being of a church. But the doctrine of Chriſt crucified for the ſalvation of ſinners is certainly a fundamental doctrine, and without a belief of this a Chriſtian church cannot exiſt. The goſpel is a diſcovery of ſalvation as purchaſed by, and attainable through a divinely appointed Redeemer. If we reject this diſcovery, we reject the very marrow—the eſſence of the goſpel; and with no propriety can we call ourſelves Chriſtians. Accordingly we find, that they, who in the apoſtles' times, joined themſelves to the church, were required to profeſs their belief, that Jeſus was the Chriſt, and that God raiſed him from the dead. They who denied that Jeſus was come in the fleſh, were called antichriſts; but all, who in every place called on the name of Jeſus Chriſt, were conſidered as belonging to his church. And when Chriſtians appeared to be well united in this grand and leading point, the apoſtles adviſed them to great con-

deſcenſion and tenderneſs in differences of ſmaller importance.

We have no right to exclude any Chriſtian, or ſociety of Chriſtians, from our charity and communion, for ſuppoſed errors, as long as thoſe errors appear not to reſpect the foundation on which the church ſtands. If we reject another for an error, which we ſuppoſe not to be eſſential, we reject him, whom yet, we believe, God has received, and thus exalt ourſelves above God. And if we make thoſe things fundamental in religion, which the goſpel has not made ſo, we then attempt to lay other foundations, beſides that which God has laid, preſumptuouſly intruding into his place. "Let no man, therefore, judge, or ſet at nought his brother, for we muſt all ſtand before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt."

The Apoſtle here teaches us in the plaineſt manner, that the church of God, both before and ſince the coming of Chriſt, is one and the ſame in its foundation and ſtructure, though different in ſome leſs important circumſtances. He ſays, "Ye are built on the foundation of the *apoſtles* and *prophets*." Theſe both form one continued foundation, whoſe parts are all united in the ſame corner ſtone, Jeſus Chriſt. Accordingly the apoſtles, in their deſcriptions of the Chriſtian church, refer expreſsly to the covenant made with Abraham, and to the predictions and promiſes contained in the books of the prophets.

Hence we ſee the great miſtake of thoſe, who, to evade the force of all arguments from the Old Teſtament, for applying the ſeal of the covenant to the infant ſeed of believers, alledge that the Chriſtian church is on a foundation entirely different from that of the ancient church; for the Apoſtle expreſsly inſtructs us, that the Chriſtian church is no other than the ancient church continued, and that the foundation has always been the ſame. I proceed to obſerve,

III. The Apoſtle here teaches us, that this ſpiritual houſe muſt be *united with*, and *framed into* the foundation. Thus it may ſtand ſecure. "Chriſt is the chief corner ſtone, *in which* all the building is *framed*."

A houſe, in order to its ſtability, muſt be joined to, and reſt upon its foundation; ſo we muſt be united to, and built upon the Savior. That only is true faith in Chriſt, which regards him as the foundation of our preſent hope, and final acceptance. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt. And let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." The building muſt be made with precious ſtones; not with hay and ſtubble. We are to build ourſelves up on a holy faith, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life." There is, indeed, a ſort of reliance on Chriſt, which is not faith, but preſumption. To depend on him for ſalvation, while we continue in impenitence and diſobedience, is to make void the law through faith: This is as contrary to the goſpel, as to depend on our own works, without regarding the Savior at all. It is building a ſuperſtructure; not with precious ſtones, but with vile rubbiſh. What Chriſt has done for us, is the ſole ground of our acceptance. In this reſpect we muſt reſt on him only, and have no confidence in ourſelves. But then it is only in a way of repentance and new obedience, that we become qualified and prepared for eternal life. True faith, therefore, relies upon him in this way; and while it truſts in his righteouſneſs, it loves his character, chooſes his precepts and ſubmits to his government. There muſt be a conformity to Chriſt, as well as a confidence in him. God has predeſtinated believers to be conformed to the image of his Son. He is a living ſtone, choſen of God, and precious; and they, as lively ſtones, are built on him a ſpiritual houſe, to offer

ſacrifices acceptable to God. To judge whether we are united to the Savior, we muſt inquire, as well whether we are conformed to him, as whether we truſt in him. "He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit."

IV. As the ſpiritual houſe muſt reſt on the foundation, ſo the ſeveral parts of it muſt be *framed* and *inſerted into each other*. The Apoſtle ſays, "In Chriſt all the building *fitly framed together*, groweth into an holy temple"—"Ye are *builded together* for an habitation of God."

As it is faith which fixes the ſaints on Chriſt the foundation, ſo it is *love* which binds them together among themſelves. "The whole body joined together and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe to the edifying of itſelf in *love*."

If in a building, a ſtone gets looſe, a joint breaks, or a ſtick of timber becomes apparently rotten, repairs muſt ſoon be made; for there is ſuch a dependence of one part on another, that when one gives way, the whole is threatened with ruin. So it is in the houſe of God: When contention or diviſion begins, however ſmall it may ſeem at firſt, there is danger of general confuſion. The breach, if neglected, naturally widens and enlarges. If, therefore, we would preſerve the beauty, ſtrength and dignity of the ſpiritual houſe, we muſt be watchful to repair breaches, as ſoon as they appear, and to remove thoſe materials which are become too corrupt to be repaired, leſt they communicate their own corruption to ſounder parts. A houſe, thus built on the firm foundation which the goſpel deſcribes, and fitly framed together in every part, will ſtand ſecure againſt thoſe winds and tempeſts, which break and demoliſh ſome other ſtructures, thrown up in haſte, reared without a ſolid foundation, compoſed of heterogeneous materials, and

framed without proportion of parts. "God has laid in Zion a precious corner ſtone; and he that believeth, ſhall not be confounded.

V. The Apoſtle deſcribes this ſpiritual houſe, as "growing unto an holy temple in the Lord, and becoming an habitation of God through the Spirit."

We muſt not content ourſelves with having built on the true foundation, but muſt bring the ſtructure to a more finiſhed and beautiful condition.

The church may grow and make increaſe, both by the progreſs of its preſent members, in knowledge and holineſs, and by the addition of new members, who become fellow workers in the ſpiritual building. We ſhould, therefore, be fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord, and abounding in every good work; and we ſhould be zealous to promote knowledge and righteouſneſs among others, to convert ſinners from the error of their ways, and to encourage thoſe who would enter into the kingdom of God.

The church is to *grow* into an *holy* temple. As, in the beſt Chriſtians, ſo in the pureſt churches on earth, there is much imperfection; but *increaſing* holineſs ſhould be the aim of all. Private Chriſtians ſhould be diligent to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Savior. Churches ſhould maintain the worſhip and ordinances of Chriſt's houſe, and unite in the ſteady obſervance of them for the common edification; not forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together, but exhort and animate one another to love and good works. The ſpiritual houſe is built up, that Chriſtians, as a holy prieſthood, may offer ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God through Jeſus Chriſt.

Churches ſhould become "an habitation of God through the Spirit." God's preſence fills the univerſe, but he dwells in a peculiar manner, in the

churches where the ſaints meet together for his worſhip and ſervice. "The Lord hath choſen Zion; he hath deſired it for his habitation—this is his reſt forever—here will he dwell." He dwells here, not only by his word and ordinances, but alſo by the influence of his Spirit, which he affords to aſſiſt his people in the duties of his worſhip, and to open their hearts for the reception of his word. The goſpel is therefore called a miniſtration of the Spirit."

If we would have the Spirit, we muſt be *builded together* for an habitation of God—we muſt be united in a church ſtate, ſo as to enjoy his word and ordinances—we muſt attend upon them in the appointed ſeaſons—we muſt preſerve peace and order among ourſelves. Thus we ſhall grow into a temple for God—thus we ſhall be builded together for an habitation of the Spirit.

Vain then is it to expect, that we ſhall enjoy the ſpecial preſence of the Spirit, if, inſtead of being builded together, we are broken aſunder and ſcattered abroad—if, inſtead of growing into an holy temple, we neglect the aſſembling of ourſelves together—if, inſtead of attending on the word of God, we put it far from us—if, inſtead of walking in peace and love, and cooperating for the common edification, we oppoſe and contend with one another, and thus deſtroy the unity and ſymmetry of God's family; for thus we reſiſt and vex the holy Spirit.

God has promiſed his Spirit to them who ſeek it. The manner in which we are to ſeek it, he has preſcribed. Our ſeeking will be ſucceſsful, when it is guided by his preſcription. He is a God of peace and order—of grace and love. We are only then a fit habitation of God through the Spirit, when we preſerve peace and order, condeſcenſion and charity among ourſelves.

Let us, therefore, as parts of God's ſpiritual houſe, be united together by love, as well as joined to the foundation by faith. Let us conſecrate ourſelves, and all that we have, to God, conſidering that we are called to be an holy prieſthood to him. Let us conſtantly and devoutly attend the ſtated worſhip of his temple; avoid whatever would diſturb the harmony, or mar the beauty of the ſpiritual building; endeavor to grow ourſelves, and to promote the growth of others, in knowledge and righteouſneſs; be builded together for a divine habitation; and rejoice in all thoſe means, which God has appointed for the perfecting of the ſaints, and for the edifying of the body of Chriſt.



SERMON XVI.

EPHESIANS iii. 1——7.

For this cauſe I Paul, the priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt for you Gentiles; if ye have heard of the diſpenſation of the grace of God, which is given to you ward, how that by revelation he made known to me the myſtery, (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may underſtand my knowledge in the myſtery of Chriſt) which in other ages was not made known unto the ſons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy Apoſtles and Prophets by the Spirit of God, that the Gentiles ſhould be fellow heirs of the ſame body, and partakers of his promiſe in Chriſt by the goſpel; whereof I am made a miniſter according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of his power.

THE calling of the Gentiles into the church of God, which is a ſubject of the preceding chapter, is ſtill continued in this. Concerning this wonderful event, Paul ſays "he had written before in few words," or had written *a little before*, i. e. in the preceding part of this epiſtle, by attending to which they might perceive, how well he underſtood the myſtery, which by revelation God had opened to him.

The myſtery here intended is the calling of the Gentiles to a participation with the Jews in the

privileges of God's church. This myſtery was in ages paſt, unknown to the ſons of men, but was now revealed by the Spirit to the Apoſtles and Prophets, that the Gentiles ſhould be fellow heirs of the ſame body, and partakers of the *promiſe* by the goſpel. The promiſe referred to, is that great promiſe made to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and to thy ſeed." The Gentiles were now called to be partakers of this promiſe with the Jews. "This bleſſing of Abraham is come on the Gentiles through Jeſus Chriſt."—"They who are Chriſt's, are Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe."—"As many as are of the faith are bleſſed with faithful Abraham."

The incorporation of Jews and Gentiles into one church was not, in former ages *wholly* unknown; for the promiſe to Abraham was, "that in his ſeed, *all the nations* of the earth ſhould be bleſſed." The introduction of the goſpel and its glorious ſucceſs among the Gentiles were often foretold by the prophets. But ſo imperfectly was this matter underſtood by the generality of the Jews, that the Apoſtle ſays, "In former ages it was not made known to the ſons of men, as it is now revealed."

The Jews, who received the goſpel, retained for ſome time the ſame prejudice againſt the Gentiles, as they had entertained before. They imagined that the way into the church of God was ſtill through the legal ceremonies; and that no Heathens could be admitted to the privileges of the goſpel, unleſs they firſt became Jews by circumciſion. But the Apoſtle ſays, "Chriſt has aboliſhed the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." The Gentiles are made heirs of the ſame body with the Jews, not by the works of the law of Moſes, but by the faith of the goſpel of Chriſt.

The abolition of the ancient diſtinction between Jews and Gentiles, and their incorporation into

one church, have fallen under our conſideration in ſome preceding diſcourſes on this epiſtle. We ſhall therefore notice, in the paſſage now read, ſuch matters only, as have not occurred before.

I. The firſt thing obſervable is, that Paul calls himſelf "a priſoner of Chriſt for the Gentiles."

The liberality of his ſentiments toward them, and the boldneſs with which he aſſerted their title to equal privileges with Jews, were the principal reaſons, why the latter perſecuted him with ſuch violence, and cauſed him to be ſent a priſoner to Rome. It was while he was there in bonds, that he wrote this epiſtle. He might, therefore, with propriety call himſelf "a priſoner of Chriſt for the Gentiles." A remarkable inſtance of the prejudice of the Jews againſt him on this account is related in the 22d chapter of the Acts. In making his defence before them, he declares the manner and circumſtances of his converſion, and the particular inſtructions given him from heaven to depart from Jeruſalem, and preach the goſpel among the Gentiles; "and when they heard this word, they lifted up their voices and ſaid, *Away with ſuch a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he ſhould live;* and they caſt off their clothes, and threw duſt into the air," in token of their abhorrence of ſuch a doctrine.

It may ſeem ſtrange, that men ſhould poſſeſs ſuch malignity of heart, as to envy their fellow mortals the means and offers of ſalvation. But perhaps this temper, which the Jews ſo remarkably diſcovered, may ſometimes be found among Chriſtians.

You will all ſay, "We never envied a man on religious accounts. We wiſh all men virtuous in this world and happy in the next." But be pleaſed to examine yourſelves. Have you never envied a good man the reputation which reſulted from his virtue? Have you never tried to detract from his

ſuperior honor, or to caſt dirt on his fair character? Have you never felt uneaſy when you heard him commended, or enjoyed a ſecret pleaſure when ill things have been ſpoken of him?

The ſpring of this bitter enmity in the Jews was their ſpiritual pride and worldly affection. They imagined that they were God's favorites, and that for them were deſigned the honors of this world, and the glories of the world to come. The Gentiles they viewed as reprobates, and they eſteemed it a virtue to hate thoſe whom God had rejected. They conſidered Paul, in his labors for the converſion of Heathens, as oppoſing their darling ſyſtem of univerſal dominion under the Meſſiah's reign: Hence they condemned him as an enemy to their religion and government.

Wherever the ſame ſpirit of pride and ſelfiſhneſs reigns, it ſtill produces ſimilar effects. How common is it, that particular ſects of Chriſtians confine ſalvation to themſelves, and not only reprobate all others, but even condemn the charity of the man who dares to hope favorably of them? How common is it, that men excuſe, in their own party, the ſame things which they ſeverely cenſure in another; and conſider thoſe actions as vices in a rival ſect, which they magnify as virtues in themſelves and their proſelytes? How common is it, that Chriſtians, ſo called; yea, even Preachers, under the ſolemn pretence of promoting the religion of Chriſt, and ſaving the ſouls of ſinners, ſow diſcord among brethren, cauſe diviſions in churches, and diſturb that peace which is an eſſential virtue of the goſpel, and without which religion cannot exiſt? How common is it, that we envy thoſe in ſuperior worldly circumſtances—that we wiſh to depreſs them—that we eagerly receive and diligently propagate ill reports concerning them?—Whence proceeds this unfriendly, unſocial conduct, but from pride and a love of the world?—Is not this

ſame temper which appeared in the Jews, when
y made Paul a priſoner for teaching, that the
ntiles were entitled to equal privileges with
m?

We ſee, then, that liberality of ſentiment eſſen-
ly belongs to true religion; and that bigotry,
red and envy among Chriſtians debaſe their
racter, and ſcandalize their profeſſion.——We
uld entertain exalted thoughts of the divine
dneſs: Such thoughts enlarge the mind and lib-
ize the feelings. We ſhould conſider the whole
nan race as the care of God's Providence; and
ember, that, while they partake of *his* kindneſs,
y deſerve not *our* hatred. We ſhould look on
fellow men as ſharers in the ſame nature, ſub-
to the ſame ſenſations, and capable of the ſame
pineſs with ourſelves; and ever be diſpoſed to
to them, as we deſire they ſhould do to us. We
uld ever entertain favorable ſentiments, where
hing appears to forbid them. While we are in-
trious to promote piety, correct error, and con-
ſinners, we ſhould be careful that our zeal
e us not to meaſures inconſiſtent with peace and
rity, and ſubverſive of order and religion.——
hile we are concerned to rectify miſtaken ſenti-
nts, and reform irregular manners in others, we
ſt ourſelves be open to conviction and patient of
roof. While we attempt to wipe the mote out
a brother's eye, we muſt conſider that the eye is
der and ſenſible—we muſt touch it with a gentle
id, leſt we irritate and inflame the part, which
pretend to relieve. We ſhould ſuffer no world-
motives to control us in our religious conduct;
act under a ſolemn ſenſe of that amazing futu-
which awaits us and all the human race. If
are governed in our religion by worldly ends,
ſhall hate and malign thoſe who differ from us,
for the ſame reaſon, that a man of avarice or
ition, hates his competitors in trade, or his ri-

vals for preferment. But if our minds are deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of God's ſupreme government and impartial judgment, we ſhall be chiefly ſolicitous to approve ourſelves to him; we ſhall rejoice when we ſee religion prevail among our fellow ſinners, whoever they are; we ſhall be pleaſed with the appearance of real virtue and piety in thoſe, who may not in all points think with us;—we ſhall chooſe to hope the beſt we can of doubtful characters;—we ſhall be more ready to condemn our own real faults, than to cenſure the ſuſpected faults of our brethren. We ſhall not imitate the men of the world, who endeavor to pull down a competitor, that they may riſe on his ruins; but ſhall imitate the liberal ſpirit of the Apoſtles, who labored to build up, in every place, the common intereſt of Chriſt's kingdom. True religion is pure and peaceable:—It rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth:—It envies not, nor behaves itſelf unſeemly:—It believes all things, and hopes all things. I proceed to obſerve, ſecondly,

II. The goſpel is "a diſpenſation of the grace of God." So the Apoſtle here calls it.

It is a diſcovery of that method, which the wiſdom of God has choſen for diſpenſing his grace and mercy toward fallen men, in order to their recovery from ſin and death, and their final ſalvation in heaven. It is called *the goſpel of God*, as it originated in his good pleaſure; and *the goſpel of Chriſt*, as he is the immediate author of it, and as his doctrines and works, his life and death, his reſurrection and aſcenſion, and the bleſſings procured by him, are the ſubjects on which it principally treats.——It is called *the word of ſalvation*, as it proclaims the offers, and ſtates the terms of ſalvation; and *the goſpel of peace*, as it diſcovers the way in which ſinners may be reconciled to God, and obtain peace with him. It is ſaid to be *the power*

of God to ſalvation, becauſe, while it brings ſalvation, it propoſes the moſt powerful motives to perſuade, and aſſiſtances to encourage ſinners to accept it. It is called *the goſpel of the grace of God*, becauſe it proceeds from his ſelf moving goodneſs, and manifeſts his abundant mercy to ſinful creatures; and *the diſpenſation of his grace*, becauſe it opens the way in which ſinners may become partakers of his grace.

The grace which the goſpel offers is pardon and glory. This grace is offered without diſtinction, to one as well as another, in the ſame way, and on the ſame terms. It is diſpenſed through the Redeemer, who gave himſelf a ranſom for ſinners.—The terms of pardon are repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Sinners are brought to a compliance with theſe terms by means of the goſpel, which is rendered effectual by the attendant operations of the Spirit. The Apoſtle ſays, "The goſpel is the power of God to ſalvation to every one that believeth, for therein the righteouſneſs of God is revealed from faith to faith, and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men." He ſpeaks of his preaching, as mighty through God to the pulling down of ſtrong holds, to the humbling of every high thing which exalts itſelf againſt the knowledge of God, and to the reducing of every thought to the obedience of Chriſt. He taught that men muſt repent and turn to God and do works mete for repentance, aſſuring them, that thus they ſhould obtain the forgiveneſs of ſins, and an inheritance among them who are ſanctified, by faith in Chriſt. As the goſpel is the word of ſalvation ſent to a ſinful race, ſo herein is proclaimed the forgiveneſs of ſins, in ſuch full and univerſal terms, that all who believe may be aſſured, that they ſhall be juſtified from all their ſins, and be made heirs of eternal life.

Now if we are under ſuch a diſpenſation of grace, How inexcuſable are the impenitent, and how amazing will be the puniſhment of thoſe who finally periſh in their guilt?

The goſpel ſuppoſes us to be loſt and helpleſs; and ſuch we certainly are. If we were not ſuch, we ſhould need no ſalvation. If we are ſuch, How joyfully ſhould we hear, and how thankfully embrace the diſpenſation of the grace of God?—Are we unworthy creatures?—How happy it is that God deals with us in a way of grace! Have we no righteouſneſs on which to ground a claim for the remiſſion of paſt ſins? How happy it is, that Jeſus the Son of God has made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs!—— Are our ſins great and numerous?—How happy it is, that the righteouſneſs of God, through the faith of Chriſt, is unto all, and upon all them that believe, and there is no difference! Do we feel the power of corruption, and the weakneſs of nature? —How happy it is, that God's grace is ſufficient for us, and that we may come boldly to his throne for grace to help in time of need?—Do we find that the ſerious ſentiments, and virtuous reſolutions awakened in us, too eaſily ſlumber and die away? ——How happy it is, that God gives us line upon line, and precept upon precept!———And what —Will we treat with cold indifference and neglect all this kind and wonderful proviſion?—Can we ſuppoſe, there is no danger in trampling on the gifts of divine love, and ſpurning the offers of eternal ſalvation? The Apoſtle has given, and let us take the warning, that "deſpiſers of the goſpel will wonder and periſh."

III. The Apoſtle ſays, This diſpenſation was committed to him for the benefit of mankind.—— "The diſpenſation of the grace of God is given to you ward."

He was allowed of God to be put in truſt with the goſpel. This was a truſt committed to him by the will of God—not a power arrogated by his own preſumption. "He was an Apoſtle not of men, neither by man, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father." And "the goſpel which he preached was not after man, neither received he it of man; —but was taught it by the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt."

Few men ever poſſeſſed higher accompliſhments than Paul. His natural abilities were great; his education was ſuperior; the manner of his converſion was extraordinary; the grace beſtowed upon him was abundant. But on neither of theſe grounds did he aſſume the work of the preacher. He waited till he was regularly called and authoriſed to it. He was firſt informed by Ananias, that he was one whom Chriſt had choſen to bear his name among the Gentiles. But he did not venture to act on this information, before he had evidence that it was from heaven. To prove this, Ananias performed a miracle. Paul's firſt miniſtrations were among the diſciples at Damaſcus, who had been witneſſes of the remarkable circumſtances of his converſion and call. He afterward joined himſelf to the Apoſtles. But, in order to his admiſſion into their fraternity, he adduced competent teſtimony. For a while he was with them coming in, and going out at Jeruſalem. Before he went forth to preach the goſpel among the Gentiles, he was ſolemnly ſeparated to the work by the prophets and teachers at Antioch, who faſted, and prayed, and laid their hands on him, and ſent him away. Paul, being thus ordained, afterward ordained others; and he charged them to commit to faithful men the things which they had received from him.

Paul, you ſee, did not rely on a ſecret, internal call, as what alone would warrant him to commence a preacher. He carefully conformed to the

order which Chriſt has inſtituted in his church.—He inſtructed Timothy and Titus to do likewiſe.—Miniſters, then, in this day, are not to ground their warrant to preach the goſpel on any *immediate* revelation. Nothing of this kind is now to be expected. If they ſhould pretend to this, it would be no warrant for others to receive them in their aſſumed character, and conſequently, no warrant for them to aſſume it, unleſs they can by miracles, prove to the world the reality of the pretended revelation.

The goſpel has pointed out the qualifications neceſſary for teachers of religion, and the manner in which they are to be inducted into office. When a man deſires the office of a biſhop, poſſeſſes the requiſite qualifications, and is not only called thereto by the brethren, but recommended alſo by the elders of the church, then he is warranted to act in the character of a goſpel biſhop.

IV. Paul ſpeaks of the knowledge of the goſpel as communicated to him *by revelation*. "God by revelation made known to me the myſtery, which, in other ages, was not made known to the ſons of men, as it is now revealed to his holy Apoſtles and Prophets by the Spirit."

We are not to ſuppoſe, that every thing, which the Apoſtles preached or wrote, was communicated to them by immediate inſpiration. Many things they learned from the writings of the Old Teſtament; and from the perſonal inſtructions of Chriſt. And the Spirit was ſent to bring all things to their remembrance, as well as to teach them all things, which they ſhould farther need to learn. Many of Chriſt's perſonal inſtructions were doubtleſs communicated to Paul, by thoſe Apoſtles who converſed with the Lord in the days of his fleſh.

In the 7th chapter of the firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, our Apoſtle uſes ſuch expreſſions as theſe; "I ſpeak by *permiſſion*—not by *commandment*."——"*I* ſpeak, not the *Lord*:"——"I have

no *commandment*, but I give *my judgment.*" Hence some would infer, that Paul often spake only by the dictates of his own reason, and without any divine influence; so that he was in doubt himself, whether he spake agreeably to the will of God.—But this certainly cannot be his meaning; for he says, "I give my judgment as one who hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful—as one that hath the Spirit of God—and the mind of Christ—and the things, which I write, are the commandments of the Lord."——But he means that Christ, in his *personal* instructions, had given no decision on the subject in question, but had left it to be determined by his Apostles under the direction of the Spirit, which was to lead them into all truth. He speaks, not by way of distinction between his own private judgment, and divine inspiration; but by way of distinction between that which was taught by the Spirit, and that which Christ taught by commandment when he was on earth. In the last verse, he says, "I think I have the Spirit of God." This is not an intimation of doubt, whether he had the Spirit; but an expression of his confidence, and an appeal to the Corinthians, that he had it; for the word should be rendered, not, *I think*, but *I appear* to have the Spirit. This appeal to them he again renews. "Am I not an Apostle?—If I am not an Apostle to others, doubtless I am to you; for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord."—"Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in wonders and mighty deeds."

God was not at the expense of inspiration to teach the Apostles those things which they knew, or might know, by other means in their hands.—But where actual knowledge, and the means of obtaining it were wanting, there inspiration supplied the defect.

It is not neceſſary for us to know the nature of this inſpiration, or the manner in which the Apoſtles were aſſured of its divinity. If we believe there is an infinite and all perfect Spirit, which poſſeſſes our reins, and even pervades univerſal nature, we muſt believe, he can reveal his will to men, by ſuch an immediate influence, as ſhall carry its own evidence, and leave on the mind no poſſible doubt of its reality. We can ſpeak to men in ſuch a manner, that they ſhall certainly know we ſpeak to them, and ſhall perfectly underſtand our meaning. If we deny the poſſibility of a certain inſpiration from God, we deny that power to him, which we ourſelves poſſeſs. But,

V. Whatever might be the manner in which the Apoſtles knew their own inſpiration, the manner in which they proved it to others is taught in our text. This was by the power of miracles. St. Paul ſays, "I am made a miniſter of the goſpel according to the gift of the grace of God by the effectual working of his power." To this evidence he often appeals for the truth of his Apoſtleſhip, and the divinity of his doctrine.

When God gives a revelation, he gives ſufficient demonſtration that it is from him. Otherwiſe it could have no authority with rational and inquiring minds. He gave the diſpenſation of grace to the Apoſtles, that they might communicate it to the world; and he endowed them with the power of miracles, that their word might be received as divine, and might work effectually in them who heard it.

How wonderful is the love of God! We ſee his goodneſs in the common courſe of his Providence; but more glorioufly is his mercy diſplayed in the goſpel, which opens a marvellous plan for the ſalvation of ſinners. This plan was communicated to the Apoſtles by the inſpiration of his Spirit, and confirmed by divers miracles according to his will.

What reverence is due to the ſacred ſcriptures, which have been thus authenticated by a divine ſeal?

If God has been at ſuch expenſe to give us a revelation, and to convince us of its authority, we ought to receive it with unwavering confidence, and to obey it with unreſerved ſubmiſſion.

What we there find expreſsly taught and commanded, that let us believe and obey, how much ſoever it might have baffled the invention, or now ſurpaſſes the comprehenſion of human reaſon.—We are not to believe without a reaſon for our faith, nor to act without a reaſon for our conduct; but we are bound to believe what God reveals, and to do what he commands, when we have evidence, that the command or revelation is from him, even though the reaſon of the command ſhould be unknown, or the matter revealed ſhould be incomprehenſible to us.

How abſurd is it to imagine, that God will communicate to men, by inſpiration, the knowledge of religion, ſince this may be obtained from the ſtanding revelation which he has given us? The ſcriptures are able to make us wiſe to ſalvation, and to furniſh us unto every good work. If neglecting theſe, we expect that religious knowledge will be communicated to us in a cheaper and eaſier way, we inſult the divine goodneſs, and expoſe ourſelves to fatal deluſions. Even in the days of the Apoſtles, God was not laviſh of inſpiration. He did not endow men immediately with that knowledge, which might be acquired by ordinary means. Cornelius was directed by a viſion to ſend for Peter, who ſhould teach him words, by which he might be ſaved. God could as eaſily have revealed to Cornelius the things by which he ſhould be ſaved, as ſend an angel to inform him, where he might find an inſtructor. But God will honor his own inſtitutions; and where theſe are ſufficient, he will

not ſuperſede them by higher and more extraordinary meaſures.

Chriſtians are dependent on, and indebted to a holy, divine influence in the religious life; but this ordinary influence of the Spirit does not immediately reveal to them new truths; it rather diſpoſes their minds to regard and obey the truths already revealed. We are never, therefore, to follow implicitly an impreſſion made on our minds—much leſs the impreſſions, which others pretend have been made on theirs; but we are to examine, by the word of God, every ſuggeſtion which is ſtarted within us, or communicated to us, and to obey or reject it, as it agrees, or diſagrees with this ſtandard. "Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits." The ſcripture is to be our guide. The ſuggeſtions, or excitations of the Spirit are not to impart to us the knowledge of duty, but to awaken our attention to duty already taught.

"Depiſe not propheſying;" or the ſtated preaching of the word. God has committed the diſpenſation of grace to his ſervants, that they may open and recommend it to others. If you would have the benefit of it, attend upon it in God's appointed way. In vain do you expect his grace, while you neglect the means, by which he is wont to communicate it. This is the voice of wiſdom, "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the ſons of men. Bleſſed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the poſts of my doors. Whoſo findeth me, findeth life, and ſhall obtain favor of the Lord; but he that ſinneth againſt me, wrongeth his own ſoul. All who hate me, love death."

SERMON XVII.

EPHESIANS iii. 8, 9, 10.

Unto me, who am leſs than the leaſt of all Saints, is this grace given, that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, and to make all men ſee what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt; to the intent, that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of God.

IN the preceding verſe the Apoſtle ſays, "He was made a miniſter according to the gift of the grace beſtowed on him by the effectual working of God's power." The mention of his apoſtolic office awakens humble reflections on his paſt guilty life, and admiring thoughts of God's grace in employing him to preach the grand myſteries of the goſpel for the inſtruction of men on earth, and even of angels in heaven.

The words read will lead us to contemplate the Apoſtle's deep ſenſe of his unworthineſs—his admiring apprehenſions of God's grace—his elevated ſentiments of the goſpel—and his enlarged views of the deſign of his miniſtry.

I. We are to consider what a *humble opinion* the Apostle had of himself. "To me, who am *less than the least of all saints*, is this grace given."

In his abilities and gifts, he was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles; and in sufferings he was more frequent, and in labors more abundant than they all. But in respect of *worthiness*, he esteemed them his superiors; for they had not, like him, persecuted the church, and they were in Christ, and became apostles before him. Of himself he says, "Last of all, Christ was seen of me, as of one born out of due time; for I am the least of the Apostles, who am not mete to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

Good Christians in honor prefer one another, and esteem others better than themselves. They are more conversant, and better acquainted with themselves, than they can be with others. Their sins come nearer their hearts, and affect them more sensibly, than the sins of others can do. They are more disposed to extenuate and excuse the failings of their brethren, than their own; for their charity hopes all things, and can cover a multitude of sins.

True religion in the heart will produce selfabasing thoughts. If you see a man ostentatious of his religious experiences and godly works, and at the same time censorious of others, and disposed to exclude them from his fellowship, you may strongly suspect, that he has never felt the power of the gospel on his heart.

The true convert forgets not his *former* character. Paul calls himself the least of saints, because he had persecuted the church. The penitent reflects often on his past guilty life, that he may be more humble in himself, more thankful to God, more watchful against sin, more diligent in the practice of religion, and thus may make more suitable returns for God's abundant grace.

The penitent not only remembers former iniquities, but as far as they have been public, *confeſſes* them before men. The Apoſtle, in his ſermons and epiſtles, often laments the errors of his paſt life, that thus he may repair the injuries which he had done to the cauſe of Chriſt. When David fell under the power of conviction, he not only condemned himſelf in the preſence of his reprover, but compoſed a penitential pſalm, which he delivered to the Jewiſh church, as a ſtanding confeſſion of his guilt and warning to others. He prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and deliver me from blood—then will I teach tranſgreſſors thy ways, and ſinners ſhall be converted unto thee."

II. The Apoſtle expreſſes his *admiring apprehenſions* of God's *grace* in *calling* him to the miniſtry. "I am made a miniſter according to the *grace of God*. To me is *this grace* given, that I ſhould preach Chriſt among the Gentiles. By the *grace* of God I am what I am.

To the ſame grace which had called him, he aſcribes all his *furniture* for the miniſtry. "Chriſt hath *enabled*, or qualified me, putting me into the miniſtry." "I am made a miniſter according to the working of God's power." "Our *ſufficiency* is of *God*, who hath made us able miniſters of the New Teſtament."

To God alſo he gives the honor of his *ſucceſs* in the miniſtry. "For," ſays he, neither is he who planteth, nor he who watereth, any thing, but God who giveth the increaſe." It was matter of wonder and thankfulneſs to him, that God ſhould honor ſo unworthy a man with ſo high an office, with ſuch eminent gifts, and with ſuch diſtinguiſhed uſefulneſs. He gloried in his infirmities, that the power of Chriſt might reſt upon him.

We ſee that the goſpel miniſtry is a reſpectable office. However contemptible ſome render them-

ſelves in it, the office itſelf is honorable. The Apoſtle directs that the elders who rule well, eſpecially they who labor in word and doctrine, ſhould be eſteemed highly in love for their work's ſake; and be counted worthy of double honor. They are ambaſſadors of God to beſeech men to be reconciled to him. They are ſtewards of the manifold grace of God. They are ſervants to men for Chriſt's ſake. They are heralds ſent forth to proclaim the tidings of ſalvation to a fallen race. A ſenſe of the dignity and importance of their office ſhould warm their zeal in the diſcharge of it. We proceed to conſider,

III. The Apoſtle's *elevated ſentiments* concerning the *goſpel* which he preached. He calls it "the *unſearchable riches* of Chriſt."

The bleſſings of the goſpel, being purchaſed by the blood of Chriſt are called *his* riches. "He, who was rich, for our ſakes became poor, that through his poverty we might be rich."

They are called *riches* on account of their excellency, fulneſs and variety. They ſurpaſs in value all the treaſures of the world; they are offered in ſuch abundance as to ſupply all our wants, and diſpenſed in ſuch manner as is ſuited to all our neceſſities. Chriſtians, how poor ſoever in this world, ſtill are rich. They are heirs of a kingdom, and entitled to the riches of the glory of an inheritance in heaven. They will inherit all things. The Apoſtle ſays to the Corinthians, "Now ye are full, ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings." Of himſelf and his brethren he ſays, "We are poor, yet make many rich; we have nothing, and yet poſſeſs all things."

The riches of Chriſt are called *unſearchable* riches.

They are undiſcoverable by human reaſon, and made known only by revelation. Hence they are called *myſteries*. The Apoſtle ſays, He was ſent

" to make all men *ſee* what was the *myſtery*, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, *who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt.*" This is the ſubſtance of the goſpel myſtery, that as all things were made by Chriſt, ſo the government of them is put into his hands—that he has opened a way in which God's rebellious ſubjects, in this part of the creation, may be reſtored to favor—that he is ordained head over all things for the church—that he gives laws and annexes their ſanctions—that he will finally diſpenſe rewards and puniſhments to different characters, and then will give up the kingdom to the Father.

As the riches of Chriſt were unſearchable to reaſon, ſo they were but imperfectly made known in the prophetic revelation. Alluding to the words of Iſaiah, the Apoſtle ſays, " Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit ſearcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God." One part of the myſtery of godlineſs was, " that Chriſt ſhould be preached to the Gentiles." Of this the Jews had no apprehenſion. To the apoſtles themſelves it was matter of admiration, that " God had granted to the *Gentiles*, repentance unto life." It was " by revelation" that " God made known to Paul the *myſtery*, which in other ages had not been made known to the ſons of men, that the *Gentiles* ſhould be fellow heirs, and of the ſame body" with the Jews, " and partakers" with them " of his promiſe in Chriſt by the goſpel."

The riches of Chriſt are of *ineſtimable value*. They are ſuch as could not be purchaſed by ſilver and gold. His own precious blood was the only adequate price for them. He has taught us, that worlds could not redeem one ſoul that is loſt. Who then can conceive the worth of that redemp-

tion, which is ſufficient for all ſinners, and will be applied to all who penitently and thankfully accept it?

In Chriſt are hidden all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge—all the riches of grace and mercy. "God grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that we may "diſcern ſomething of his manifold wiſdom, and may, according to the meaſure of ſaints, "be able to comprehend what is the length, and breadth, and heighth, and depth, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge."

What abundant cauſe of gratitude and joy have we, who by nature are ſinners of the Gentiles, that we have been called to partake of theſe unſearchable riches? With what pleaſure ſhould we read—with what tranſport ſhould we hear the goſpel of our ſalvation? This diſcovers to us wonders which human reaſon could not have ſearched out, and proclaims to us bleſſings which human virtue could never have ſecured.

Ye ſons of poverty and want; go take a ſhare in theſe unſearchable riches. Vain are worldly treaſures, and worldly purſuits. No longer ſpend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which cannot ſatisfy; but eat that which is good, and let your ſouls delight in fatneſs. Seek durable and ſubſtantial riches—ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs. "The kingdom of heaven is like treaſure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found, he hideth; and for joy thereof, goeth and ſelleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Go, make this purchaſe, and you will at once poſſeſs unſearchable riches.

Let us now,

IV. Conſider what *grand* and *enlarged* conceptions the Apoſtle entertained of the *deſign* and *importance* of his miniſtry.

The primary and immediate object of it, he tells us, was to make *all men* ſee what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery which was hidden from ages." It was to open to mankind that mighty ſcheme, which the wiſdom of God had formed, and which his goodneſs had, for ages, been carrying into execution for the redemption of our fallen race. When Jeſus firſt appeared unto Paul, he ſaid to him, "I will make thee a miniſter, and a witneſs of the things which thou haſt ſeen, and in which I ſhall appear to thee; and I will ſend thee to the people and to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God." To this heavenly viſion Paul was not diſobedient, but ſhewed to all men among whom he preached, "that they muſt repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." The great theme of his preaching was the ſalvation of ſinners through Chriſt, in a way of repentance. He preached Chriſt the Savior, not of Jews only, but of Gentiles alſo—of all who believe, whatever might be their character, condition or nation.

The manner of his preaching was *plain* and *familiar*. He preached the *unſearchable* riches of Chriſt, with an intent that all men might *ſee* and *know* them.

His preaching tended to *peace* and *union*. It was not his object to form parties here and there, under different names, but to bring all, whether Jews or Gentiles, into one body, and into fellowſhip one with another. He taught all Chriſtians, in every place, to conſider themſelves as citizens of one great community, ſubjects of one common Lord, partakers of the ſame privileges, heirs of the ſame inheritance, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. How different was our Apoſtle from thoſe miſguided zealots, who interrupt the fellowſhip of Chriſtians, and ſow diſcord among brethren by teaching their partizans to ſay to oth-

ers, "Stand by yourſelves, come not near to us, for we are holier than you!"—"Mark them who cauſe diviſions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have received, and avoid them: For they who are ſuch ſerve not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly."

Paul's miniſtry was deſigned for the benefit, not of men only, but of *angels* too. He preached the unſearchable riches of Chriſt, "that now unto *principalities* and *powers* in *heavenly places*, might be be known by the church the manifold wiſdom of God."

The angels learn much of the wiſdom of God from his works. When he laid the foundations of the earth, "they ſang together and ſhouted for joy." And ſtill they praiſe him, aſcribing to him glory, honor and power, "becauſe he has created all things, and for his pleaſure they are, and were created." If from theſe works they learn God's character, they doubtleſs underſtand it more perfectly from the diſpenſation of his grace to fallen men. In this they deſire to look; for in this his wiſdom, holineſs, mercy and truth are moſt gloriouſly diſplayed. They were ſent to foretell the birth of the Savior, and of John, his forerunner. When the Redeemer was born, they came to notify the happy event to the ſhepherds in the field; and on this occaſion they glorified God in anthems of praiſe. They attended Jeſus in his temptations, and ſtrengthened him in his ſufferings. They watched his ſepulchre while he ſlept, opened it when he aroſe, and conveyed the tidings of his reſurrection to his anxious friends. They were preſent at his aſcenſion, and teſtified to his diſciples his entrance into his glory. They are all miniſtering Spirits, ſent forth to miniſter to them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation. They aided the primitive preachers in their labors and protected them in their dangers. They viſited, and ſtill they viſit

the worſhipping aſſemblies of Chriſtians to obſerve what paſſes there. Hence Paul enjoins on Chriſtians, a decent deportment in the houſe of prayer, "becauſe of the angels." And hence he charges miniſters, "in the preſence of the elect angels," to be faithful in their office.

Now if angels were preſent in the churches when firſt the goſpel was preached, they learnt more of God's manifold wiſdom, than ever they had known before. The myſtery of divine grace to guilty men was unſearchable to angels till it was revealed by the Spirit to the apoſtles, and by them opened and proclaimed to the world. They had before ſeen the wiſdom, power and goodneſs of God in creation and providence; but the diſplay of his manifold wiſdom, and of his abundant grace in the redemption of men by the incarnation, crucifixion and reſurrection of his Son, opened a new ſcene of wonders, and afforded new themes of praiſe. Now they beheld *that*, which before they had never ſeen, and but imperfectly conceived, the Son of God aſſuming humanity, dying for the guilty, riſing from the grave, aſcending to glory, ſhedding down the Spirit, commiſſioning apoſtles, and ſending them forth to proclaim pardon and life to the chief of ſinners. Accordingly in the revelation, they are ſaid to ſing a *new* ſong; not only the ſong of *Moſes*, which they had been uſed to ſing; *Thou art worthy to receive glory, for thou haſt created all things*; but alſo the ſong of the *Lamb*: *Thou art worthy to receive bleſſing and praiſe, for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood.*— Though they are not the immediate ſubjects of this redemption, having kept their firſt ſtate, yet they join in the ſong of Saints who have been redeemed from the earth. Such is their benevolence—ſuch their joy for the redemption of fallen men—ſuch their admiration of God's new diſcovered grace to ſinners, that they take into their own mouths, the

ſong of ſaints; "Thou waſt ſlain and haſt redeemed *us* by thy blood." The Apoſtle adds, "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, ſaying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to receive power, and riches, and honor, and glory, and bleſſing." And every creature joined in the anthem, ſaying, "Bleſſing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."

REFLECTIONS.

1. This ſubject may ſerve to enlarge our views of the divine government. The goſpel diſpenſation, which immediately concerns the human race, anſwers ſome important purpoſes to other intelligencies. All the ways in which angels may be benefitted by it, we are unable to conceive. But that hereby their knowledge and admiration of God's wiſdom, grace and holineſs are increaſed, and conſequently their devotion, love and felicity are exalted, we are expreſsly taught.

2. This ſubject ſuggeſts to us, that heaven is a place of improvement. The angels ſtill are learners. They learned much by the publication of the goſpel; and new wonders in the courſe of providence are opening to their view. In the prophetic book of the Revelation we find them from time to time, breaking forth into freſh admiration and praiſe on every new diſpenſation of mercy toward the church.

The ſaints here below are exhorted to grow in knowledge and grace. Whatever advances they make, they are ſtill imperfect. When they arrive to heaven, they are ſaid to be made perfect, as being wholly freed from ſin. But they are not ſo perfect in holineſs, but that there is room for improvement. If angels grow in knowledge, ſo may ſaints. They will receive farther advancement at

the reſurrection. But even then they will not have reached the ſummit of created perfection. They may, like angels, be ever learning, ever meeting new objects of wonder, and new occaſions of praiſe, as they trace the ways, and converſe with the works of God.

3. We ſee the *humility* of angels. They are ſuperior beings, exalted to heavenly places, and called principalities and powers; yet they diſdain not to learn from the church on earth the manifold wiſdom of God. Yea, they are willingly employed as miniſtering ſpirits to men. From their example let us learn humility and charity. If we hope to dwell with angels above, let us cultivate that temper which is their happineſs and glory. Let us learn more of the wiſdom of God, nor think it diſhonorable to learn wiſdom from inferiors. Let us condeſcend to men of low eſtate, and bear the infirmities of the weak. For this we have a more engaging example than that of angels, even the example of the Son of God, who came not to be miniſtered unto," but to miniſter. He was among his diſciples, as one who ſerved. He gave them a pattern of meekneſs, humility and love, that they ſhould do to one another, as he had done to them.

SERMON XVIII.

EPHESIANS iii. 11, 12, 13.

———According to his eternal purpoſe, which he purpoſed in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, in whom we have boldneſs and acceſs with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I deſire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

THE Apoſtle here reſumes a thought, which he had mentioned ſeveral times before, that the admiſſion of the Gentiles to a participation in the privileges of the goſpel was according to the eternal purpoſe, which God had made in Chriſt Jeſus. The extenſion of the church of God to comprehend all nations, was not a new deſign; it was a plan which divine wiſdom had formed before the world was made. Though it was a myſtery once unknown, and ſtill hardly credible to the Jews, yet intimations had been given of it in prophecy, and diſpoſitions had been made toward it in Providence, through all preceding ages of the world. The promiſe of a Savior to fallen Adam reſpected his poſterity, as well as himſelf; and as he was the head of the human race, it extended alike to all men. The promiſe to the patriarchs was more explicit; that "in their ſeed all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed." Under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, the Savior was typified in ſacred perſons

and religious ceremonies, and foretold in the preaching and writings of the prophets, who ſometimes expreſsly deſcribed him, as coming "to bring ſalvation to the ends of the earth." The frequent diſperſions and captivities of the Jews conveyed to other nations a knowledge of their religion, of their prophetic writings, and of their promiſed Meſſiah, and raiſed in the minds of inquiſitive Heathens an expectation of this wonderful perſon. But the full diſcovery of this divine ſcheme was not made, until after Chriſt's reſurrection, when he commanded his Apoſtles to go into all the world, and preach his goſpel to all nations. Nor does it ſeem to have been perfectly underſtood, even by the Apoſtles themſelves, until Peter, by a heavenly viſion, was directed to go and preach the goſpel to the family of the Roman centurion, Cornelius. After Peter had executed this miſſion, finding ſome of his brethren diſſatisfied with his conduct, he explained to them the reaſons of it, and informed them of the ſucceſs which had attended it: And, on hearing of theſe things, "they glorified God, ſaying, Then hath God granted to the Gentiles alſo repentance unto life."

To impreſs the minds of the Epheſians with a deeper ſenſe of their indebtedneſs to the ſovereign grace of God, the Apoſtle often repeats this thought, that the offer of ſalvation, now brought to them by the goſpel of Chriſt, was not the fruit of their works, intentions or deſires, but the reſult of God's eternal purpoſe in his Son, and the effect of thoſe diſpoſals which he had been making from the beginning of the world. "God was found of them who ſought him not, and made manifeſt to them who inquired not after him."

There was nothing which more filled the mind of this Apoſtle, and which he more frequently inculcated on Chriſtians, than the freeneſs, extent,

ſovereignty and glory of God's grace in the ſalvation of ſinners.

The more we feel and realize our dependence on divine grace, the more thankfully ſhall we receive it, and the more diligently ſhall we improve it; the more humble ſhall we be in our opinion of ourſelves, and the more charitable in our diſpoſition toward others; the more watchful to abſtain from evil, and the more zealous to abound in every good work.

One great and wonderful privilege, which the grace of God has beſtowed on us, is particularly mentioned in our text. "In Chriſt we have boldneſs and acceſs with confidence by the faith of him."

To this privilege we will now attend.

I. The Apoſtle ſays, "We have *acceſs.*" The word ſignifies an approach to ſome object. Here it intends a near approach to God in the duties of worſhip; or ſuch a ſtate of peace with God as allows a freedom of intercourſe. "Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God, and acceſs to that grace in which we ſtand." This acceſs is expreſſed by our "coming to the throne of grace"—by our "entering into the moſt holy place"——by our "having a hope by which we draw nigh to God."

Theſe phraſes allude to the Jewiſh worſhip.—— There was a viſible ſymbol of God's preſence, which attended the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs. This was called the glory of the Lord, and, ſometimes, the Lord himſelf. When the tabernacle was erected and the ark of the covenant placed therein, this ſymbol took its reſidence on the mercy ſeat which was made on the ark, and between the Cherubims which covered the mercy ſeat. And the worſhippers were ſaid to come near to God, becauſe they came near to that ſenſible token of his majeſty and glory. The gracious preſence of God is as really afforded now, as it was then, although there is not

e ſame viſible ſymbol; and, therefore, we may, truly as the ancient Jews, be ſaid to draw near God, when we engage in the ſolemn duties of orſhip. Yea, the Apoſtle ſignifies, that we have earer acceſs than they, becauſe now the way into e holieſt is made manifeſt, into which we have perty to enter by the blood of Chriſt.

Theſe phraſes have alſo a foundation in the cuſms and uſages of mankind. When one, in beılf of himſelf or of others, would preſent his petiın to a ſovereign, he muſt obtain liberty of acceſs him: So God's allowing us to make our ſupplitions to him, is expreſſed by our drawing near him. It is a familiar manner of expreſſion ſuit- to convey the idea of great condeſcenſion on od's part, and high privilege on ours.

II. The Apoſtle obſerves, that "we have *boldneſs* acceſs. The word properly ſignifies a *freedom ſpeaking*, in oppoſition to that reſtraint which we el, when we are in the preſence of one whom e dread, and in whoſe goodneſs we can place no nfidence.

The word expreſſes the *fulneſs* of that *liberty*, hich under the goſpel all Chriſtians enjoy, of rawing near to God. The Apoſtle ſays, "We ave boldneſs to enter into the moſt holy place."— nder the legal diſpenſation, the people approach- unto God by the miniſtration of the prieſts, who ere appointed to offer gifts and ſacrifices for them: ut now all believers are "an holy prieſthood to ffer up ſpiritual ſacrifices acceptable to God rough Jeſus Chriſt." Under the law, the ordiry prieſts came only into the ſanctuary: The high rieſt alone, and he but once a year, came within e moſt holy place: But, under the goſpel, all hriſtians may at all times draw near to God in all rdinances, and may on all occaſions make known heir requeſts to him.

The word farther expreſſes that freedom of *ſpirit* with which we ſhould come to God. The diſpoſition of our hearts ſhould correſpond with the liberal and gracious diſpenſation under which we are placed.

We ſhould come to God with a ſpirit of *love*, in oppoſition to ſervile fear. To revere the authority, dread the diſpleaſure, and tremble at the judgments of God, are tempers in no reſpect inconſiſtent with the full exerciſe of love. But the fear which ariſes from a diſtruſt of God's mercy and goodneſs, and which makes us reluctant to come into his preſence, is contrary to the freedom of the goſpel, and to that boldneſs which it imparts. Love caſts out this fear. And "God has not given us the ſpirit of fear, but the ſpirit of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind." The charms of mercy and grace, in which our heavenly Father manifeſts himſelf to us, ſhould awaken in our ſouls gratitude, hope, love, and every cheerful and devout affection.

This boldneſs imports *frequency* in our approaches to God. Slaves, under the influence of fear, ſtand at a diſtance from their maſter. Children, invited by the goodneſs of a father, come often into his preſence. So Chriſtians, confiding in God's fatherly care for them and attention to them, ſhould embrace all opportunities to converſe with him.—Animated by a ſenſe of the liberty allowed them, they ſhould bring to the throne of grace their daily prayers and praiſes. Since they are not ſtraitened in him, they ſhould not be ſtraitened in their own bowels. The pious Pſalmiſt wiſhed to dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of his life, that he might behold the beauty of the Lord and inquire at his temple.

How great is the privilege which Chriſtians enjoy! They may look up to God as their Father—may go daily into his preſence—may tell him all their wants—may confeſs before him all their ſins

—may ſolicit the greateſt favors—may urge their requeſts with moſt fervent importunity; and they need not fear, that their earneſtneſs will offend him, or their continual coming will weary him.

III. The Apoſtle teaches us, that "we have acceſs *with confidence.*" This confidence is what is elſewhere called a *better hope*, and the *full aſſurance* of faith. It is oppoſed to doubting and diſtruſt.

The nature of confidence in prayer is clearly explained by the Apoſtle John. "If our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God; and whatſoever we aſk we receive of him, becauſe we keep his commandments, and do thoſe things which are pleaſing in his ſight. This is the confidence which we have in him, that if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have the petitions which we deſired of him."

To confidence of ſucceſs in prayer it is neceſſary, that we "aſk according to God's will"—for ſuch things as he allows us, and in ſuch a manner as he requires us to aſk. Temporal bleſſings we muſt aſk with humble ſubmiſſion to that ſupreme wiſdom, which alone can judge what is beſt. Spiritual bleſſings we muſt ſolicit with the ſtrongeſt importunity; but at the ſame time with a concern to perform the conditions on which they are offered. What God has abſolutely promiſed, he will certainly beſtow. What he has promiſed conditionally, will follow our compliance with the conditions.—The common favors of his providence will be granted in ſuch time, manner and meaſure, as his wiſdom ſees moſt ſuitable. One may pray in faith—in a full confidence of God's power, wiſdom, mercy and faithfulneſs, and yet feel ſtrong doubts, whether he ſhall receive the bleſſings for which he prays; becauſe he is jealous of his own heart, and diſtruſtful of his own wiſdom. A penitent has an

undoubting reliance on God's mercy to forgive;—but this reliance may be attended with a painful ſuſpicion of the ſincerity of his own repentance.—A perſon in affliction may pray for its removal with a ſtrong aſſurance of God's wiſdom to diſcern, and readineſs to do what is beſt; and yet he may doubt whether the removal will be granted; becauſe he knows himſelf incompetent to judge what his own ſafety, the good of others and the glory of God's name may require. Confidence in prayer is a full reliance on God; but this may be accompanied with a humble diffidence of ourſelves.

IV. We are farther taught, that all our hope of ſucceſs in prayer muſt reſt upon the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. "*In Chriſt* we have acceſs with confidence, *by the faith of him.*"

In his name we are to come before God; and in the virtue of his atonement and interceſſion we may hope for acceptance. As the only begotten Son, he is in the boſom of the Father. As he is holy and without ſin, God delights in him and hears him always. As he is perfect in knowledge, none of our wants can eſcape his notice. Having taken part of our fleſh and blood, he is not aſhamed to call us brethren. Having been tempted in all points as we are, he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Having purchaſed by his blood the bleſſings which we need, he can make effectual interceſſion. As he is a Mediator ordained of God, what he has done and ſtill is doing for us will be accepted in our behalf.

"Seeing we have ſuch an high prieſt over the houſe of God, we may draw near with true hearts in the full aſſurance of faith."

The Apoſtle, having ſtated to the Epheſians their great privilege of acceſs to the throne of grace, teaches them, what improvement they ought to make of

it. "Wherefore I deſire, that ye faint not at my tribulations for you."

He had before called himſelf "a priſoner of Chriſt for them." He here expreſſes the ſame thought.—It was for them that he ſuffered his preſent bonds and afflictions. Theſe were the conſequences of his preaching the goſpel to the Gentiles, and of his acknowledging them as fellow citizens with the Jews. Fearing, leſt his ſufferings in the cauſe of the goſpel ſhould diſhearten theſe new and unexperienced converts, he ſets before them a view of their happy ſecurity under the protection of divine grace. Dangers indeed were before them; but what had they to fear, who had boldneſs of acceſs to God, with confidence by the faith of Chriſt?—"Wherefore," ſays he, "I deſire that ye faint not at my tribulations, *which is your glory.*"

It was one of the glories of their religion, that he who preached it, was not aſhamed to ſuffer for it. His conſtancy and zeal were an unequivocal evidence, that he believed his religion to be true and important, and a decided proof of its efficacy and power to ſupport men in the ſevereſt trials. He wiſhed them to conſider, that they had not received a religion which the teachers of it were afraid to maintain; but a religion which inſpired them with courage to meet, and with patience to bear every evil which the world could threaten. Though the Epheſians were expoſed to the ſame afflictions which he endured, he deſired them not to faint; for the faith which ſtrengthened him, would ſuſtain them; the animating principles, which the goſpel afforded to him, it imparted alſo to them; and they, as well as he, might draw near to God with confidence, and obtain grace to help in time of need. Since they were admitted ſo near to God—were allowed ſuch free intercourſe with him—had ſuch aſſurance of his attention to their prayers; he hoped, they would neither faint at the tribulations,

which they ſaw in him, nor at thoſe which might happen to them. It was their glory, that they had received the goſpel, at a time when it was attended with affliction; and it would ſtill be their greater glory, if they ſhould hold the beginning of their confidence ſtedfaſt unto the end.

REFLECTIONS.

1. In the Apoſtle Paul we have a noble example of benevolence.

He was joyful in his tribulation, finding that it conduced to the happineſs of others. He upbraids not the Epheſians with the troubles which he endured for them: He rather exhorts them to be thereby animated to conſtancy in the faith. He ſpeaks, in the ſame kind and affectionate terms to the Philippians; "I would have you underſtand, that the things which happened to me, have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the goſpel. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to ſpeak the word without fear. It is my earneſt expectation and hope, that in nothing I ſhall be aſhamed; but that with all boldneſs, as always, ſo now alſo Chriſt ſhall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. If I be offered on the ſacrifice and ſervice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the ſame cauſe alſo do ye joy and rejoice with me."

It is the glory of the religion of Jeſus, that, where it comes with power, it enlarges the mind, purifies the affections, ſubdues the paſſions, ſweetens the temper, ſoftens the heart to ſenſibility and love, and excites to every good work.

2. We are taught that new converts ſhould be aſſiſted and encouraged in religion.

Theſe Epheſians, who but lately had embraced the goſpel, were in danger of fainting under the

tribulations which attended it. The Apoſtle, therefore, warned them of the trials which they might expect, and fortified their minds by arguments adapted to their caſe.

They who enter on the religious life muſt ſit down and count the coſt. They muſt form their good reſolutions with an apprehenſion of difficulty before them—with a ſenſe of their own weakneſs—and with a humble reliance on the power of divine grace. Many ſet out in the chriſtian courſe, with warm zeal, but with little conſideration. Hence, when they meet with unlooked for oppoſition, they turn back and walk no more in it. As ſeed ſown in a ſhallow ſoil ſuddenly ſprings up, but, under the ſcorching beams of the ſun, withers away; ſo they who hear the word and receive it haſtily, may diſcover much joy at firſt; but when tribulation ariſes, they are offended. They only bring forth fruit with patience, who receive the word and underſtand it, and ſo cheriſh it in the heart, that it takes deep root.

3. We farther learn, that our beſt ſupport under the troubles of the world, is that boldneſs of acceſs to God, which we enjoy in Chriſt Jeſus. This is the argument by which the Apoſtle perſuades the Epheſians not to faint at the ſight of his tribulations, or at the apprehenſion of their own. As Chriſtians have full liberty to come to God—may uſe great freedom of ſpeech in his preſence—may expreſs all their deſires—may aſk all that they need, with a confidence that he hears and regards them, What occaſion have they to faint? What danger can diſmay them? What difficulty diſcourage them? What burden depreſs them? What ſervice ſeem too hard for them? "When I am weak, then am I ſtrong."—"I can do all things through Chriſt who ſtrengthens me."

4. How great a thing it is to pray as we ought —to pray in ſuch a manner, that we can truly ſay, "We have had acceſs to God?"

Do we not often aſk we know not what, and pray we know not how? How much diſtraction is there in our devotion? How cold are our deſires? How uninfluencing our ſenſe of the Being whom we addreſs? How often do we bring into his preſence impatience, diſcontent, envy, ill will and other diſorderly paſſions? If we have received, or think we have received an injury, How difficult it is to calm the tumult of the mind, and recover that ſerenity, ſweetneſs and benevolence of heart, which are neceſſary to prepare us for communion with God? —How much ſin is mixed with our prayers? We have need to pray, that our prayers may be forgiven.

5. Let the grace and condeſcenſion of God encourage us, unworthy as we are, to come often into his preſence. He is rich in mercy to them who call upon him. Our wants are great and numerous, and he only can ſupply them. Let us attend to our wants, and we ſhall find matter for prayer —we ſhall know what to ſay when we ſtand before him.

How aſtoniſhing is it, that ſo many contentedly live ſtrangers to God, and at a diſtance from him? That, abſorbed in the pleaſures and intereſts of the world, they neglect the favor of God, and the privilege of converſing with him? They who forſake him, forſake their own mercies. As for us, it is good that we ſhould draw near to him: They who are far from him, periſh.

SERMON XIX.

EPHESIANS iii. 14, 15.

For this cauſe I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

PAUL, in the preceding verſe, expreſſes his deſire, that the Epheſian Chriſtians would not faint at the tribulations which *he* ſuffered; but rather from his example would take courage to meet all the trials and dangers, which might await them in the cauſe of religion. Senſible of the weakneſs of human nature, and its averſion to ſufferings, he fears for his new converts, leſt, in thoſe perſecuting times, ſome ſhould renounce the faith. He therefore labors to fortify their minds by proper arguments, that they might not be moved from the hope of their calling; and prays that they might be ſtrengthened by the grace of God to conſtancy and perſeverance in the truth. "For this cauſe," ſaith he; i. e. becauſe of the tribulations which attend the profeſſion of the goſpel; "I *bow my knees* unto the Father."

As "bowing the knees" was a common token of reverence in the preſence of ſuperiors, and a poſture often uſed in prayer, to expreſs the humility and engagedneſs of the mind; ſo the Apoſtle,

by this phraſe, intends *prayer itſelf:* And his meaning is, "For this cauſe I, with all reverence and fervor of ſoul, ſupplicate the grace of God to ſtrengthen and confirm you in the religion which you have embraced and profeſſed." Thus he expreſſes the ſame ſentiment in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians; "For this cauſe we ceaſe not to pray for you, and to deſire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of God's will, ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." The phraſe ſuggeſts to us, that in our prayers for ourſelves, and interceſſions for others, we ſhould bow our ſouls before God with deep humility, and preſent our petitions with collection of thought, and intenſeneſs of deſire.

The Apoſtle addreſſes the great God, as, "the Father of our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*"

God is the Father of all creatures: He by his powerful word called into being thoſe numerous world's which are ſcattered through the immenſity of ſpace, and has given exiſtence to the various tribes of creatures which inhabit them.

Mankind are God's offſpring in a higher ſenſe than inanimate and ſenſitive creatures: He is the Father of their Spirits, and his inſpiration has given them underſtanding.

But in a moſt peculiar ſenſe is he the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who, in regard of his divine nature, is called the image of the inviſible God, the brightneſs of his glory, and the ſimilitude of his perſon; and, in regard of his human nature, is called the Son of God, his only begotten, and his beloved ſon; becauſe he proceeded and came forth from God in ſuch a manner, as no other being ever has done.

The conception of Chriſt's human nature, and its union with the divine, though myſteries which we cannot explain, may yet be underſtood as far as religion is concerned in them. In general we are

inſtructed, that Chriſt is the mediator between God and men, and that through him we muſt draw near to the Father. Innocent, unoffending creatures may approach him as their Father by creation. We guilty creatures muſt come to him through his only begotten, and well beloved Son. We muſt look to him not merely as *our* Father; for we have ſinned, and are no more worthy to be called his children; but eſpecially as the Father of Jeſus our Lord, who was ordained before the foundation of the world, and was manifeſted in theſe laſt times for us, that by him we might believe in God.

"I bow my knees unto the *Father* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*"

As the members of a family are denominated from the head, ſo all the faithful ſervants of God are repreſented as bearing his name. Chriſt ſays, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and I will write upon him *the name of my God*, and *my new name*," i. e. *the Son of God*, which name Chriſt had newly aſſumed. Under the Old Teſtament he was very rarely called *the Son of God*. While he appeared in the fleſh, *the Son of Man*, was his uſual title. After his reſurrection he has ſeldom called any more by this name; but was ſtyled *the Son of God*. This is therefore ſaid to be a *new name*; and this is the name which he gives to true believers. The whole body of Chriſt's followers are diſtinguiſhed, as having his Father's name written in their foreheads. The meaning is, they ſhall be denominated the *ſons of God*; and in that character ſhall be openly and publicly received. Chriſt's *new name*, and the *name* of his *Father*, mean the ſame, even *the ſons of God*; and by this name the happineſs of the ſaints in heaven is often expreſſed. "God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be *their God*, and they ſhall be *his ſons* and *daughters*. They ſhall be *heirs* of God,

and *joint heirs* with Chriſt, and ſhall inherit all things.

Believers on earth, and ſaints and angels in heaven, are all one family. They are ſervants of the ſame Lord, and children of the ſame parent. From him the whole family in heaven and earth is named. The ſaints in this world are ſtrangers and pilgrims. They have here no continuing city. But they will ſoon be called home to join their brethren in the upper world. They are here training up for heaven; and when their courſe of diſcipline is finiſhed, they will be received to thoſe bleſſed manſions, which Chriſt has prepared, and into which thoſe have entered who are already dead in Chriſt.

It may be uſeful to contemplate the relation between believers on earth, and ſaints and angels in heaven.

1. They all ſpring from the ſame common parent. They have all one father; one God has created them. Angels are an order of beings ſuperior to men; they are endued with larger powers, and raiſed to higher glory—But ſtill they are dependent creatures. They owe their exiſtence, their powers, and all their glory to the ſame God, to whom we are indebted for our inferior ſtation in the ſcale of being.

2. The family in heaven and earth are all governed by the ſame general laws. There are indeed ſome laws peculiar to the preſent ſtate. In a family of children, the younger are under a certain diſcipline ſuited to their tender and unexperienced age. So the ſaints in this world are under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father. But the main ſubſtance of religion is the ſame, both in heaven and in earth. The moral kingdom of God is a kingdom which cannot be moved. The laws of it are immutable; and they are all ſuited to the nature and condition of his ſubjects, and need no re-

viſion or amendment. To love, reverence, worſhip and ſerve the Supreme Lord, and to promote the glory of his kingdom, and the happineſs of their fellow ſubjects, are obligations common to all rational and moral beings in heaven and in earth.

3. As children of the ſame family, they ſhare in the ſame pleaſures and enjoyments. The glorified ſpirits are repreſented as ſurrounding God's throne, and pouring forth in his preſence their ſongs of adoration and praiſe—as celebrating his perfections and works, the wonders of his providence toward themſelves and other beings, and eſpecially the glories of his grace toward fallen men. The ſaints below taſte a ſweetneſs and delight in the ſame devout and pious exerciſes. "It is good to ſing praiſes to the Lord: It is pleaſant, and praiſe is comely." The angels are miniſtering ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter to the heirs of ſalvation. They are highly gratified in beholding the methods, and in ſerving the deſigns of divine love toward our guilty race. When the Savior was born, heaven was moved with joy: There was a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, who came down to earth, and ſang, "Glory to God in the higheſt; on earth peace; good will to men." True Chriſtians here below partake of the ſame benevolent temper. They rejoice in the good done, and in the opportunities to do good to their fellow mortals. There is joy in heaven, when a ſinner repents. There is joy in the church, when religion prevails, and ſinners are converted from the error of their ways.

4. As among the members of a family there is uſually a general reſemblance of features, ſpeech and manners, ſo the ſaints above and below have the ſame general temper; the ſame diſtinguiſhing complexion.

Man, at firſt, was made little lower than the angels. He bore the ſame divine image. This was loſt by the apoſtaſy. It is in a degree reſtored by

regeneration, which renews the ſoul after the image of God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. This image will be perfected in heaven, where the children of God ſhall be made equal to the angels—not, indeed, equal in the degree, but equal in the integrity of the moral character.

There are belonging to the Chriſtian temper here, ſome virtues and graces, for which in heaven there will be no room; ſuch as penitence, ſelfdenial, temperance, forgiveneſs, faith and hope. But the main, governing features of the religious temper, are the ſame in believers here, and in ſaints and angels above; ſuch as love and gratitude to God, benevolence and goodneſs to fellow creatures, humility in their views of themſelves, and cheerful ſubjection to the divine will. In heaven charity never fails—God's will is done there—boaſting is excluded—all glory is given to God.

5. The ſaints, in heaven and in earth, have one common intereſt. In this reſpect they are like a well regulated family. The glory of God, the advancement of religion, and the promotion of the general happineſs of the moral world are the objects on which their hearts are placed. When the Apoſtle John fell down before the angel who ſhewed him the things relating to the church of God, the angel ſaid to him, "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow ſervant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them who keep the ſayings of this book; worſhip God."

6. The members of a family, however diverſified in age, condition, abilities and improvements, agree in this, that they look to, rely upon, and are guided by the ſame head. It is ſo in God's great family. Angels and glorified ſpirits are as much dependent on him, as are the ſaints below. They have their being in him, and are directed by him. To him they owe, not only their

natural existence, but the continuance of their holy and happy state.

7. They are all objects of God's love.

In a virtuous family, there are different measures of virtue in the different members; and the parent, while he loves them all, approves some more highly than others. So it is in this large family. There are different degrees of goodness in the saints here. The best of these fall below the measure of those who are made perfect in heaven, and the highest human saint above must be inferior to the angels, who, having kept their first state, have been in continual progress from their creation. Consequently, some of God's family are more excellent and amiable in his sight than others. But yet he loves them all. The smallest measure of grace in the humble believer is pleasing to God; and every work and service which he performs will meet a suitable reward. "Whatsoever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." He who only gives a cup of cold water to a needy brother, from love to Christ, shall in no wise lose his reward. The saints are called his treasure—his jewels. He will gather them to himself. None of them will be lost.

8. At the last day, all the saints, these who are now on earth, and those who are in heaven, will meet in God's presence, be openly acknowledged as his children, and admitted to dwell together in his house forever.

Heaven is remote from this earth—remote in its nature, if not in its situation. The saints are here in an evil world—a world of corruption, temptation and sorrow. Into heaven nothing enters which defiles or afflicts. The day is fast approaching, when the saints here, will rise up and ascend on high, to meet and mingle with the saints above; and all will unite together in one great family,

never to be diſperſed. The Lord Jeſus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. He will come with ten thouſands of his ſaints. The dead in Chriſt will be raiſed; they who are alive and remain will be changed; they all will mount up together to meet the Lord, coming with his numerous train, in the air; and thence they will ever be with the Lord.

We have ſeen, in what reſpects the ſaints in heaven and earth conſtitute one family.

Let us attend to the reflections which this ſubject ſuggeſts to us.

1. If we eſtimate the dignity of men from the families with which they are connected, how honorable is the believer? He belongs to the family in heaven. He is a ſon of the moſt high God. He is a fellow ſervant with angels. He has an inheritance with the ſaints in glory. He has a poſſeſſion purchaſed for him, not with corruptible things as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of God's beloved Son. He has a houſe in reſerve for him, which is builded, prepared and furniſhed, not by human hands, but by a divine power. How ſhould all earthly riches and honors be deſpiſed by the Chriſtian, who is born to ſuch noble proſpects, and entitled to ſuch glorious poſſeſſions? May he not be contented in poverty, and patient in adverſity, when he believes, that heavenly riches and everlaſting felicities nearly await him, and that his preſent light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for him a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory!

2. We ſee our obligations to mutual condeſcenſion, peaceableneſs and love.

The family in heaven are all of one heart, and one ſoul. They are united in the worſhip and ſervice of God, and in the deſigns of benevolence toward one another. If we profeſs to belong to that noble family, let us learn to imitate their temper

and manners. Let us love one another with a pure heart fervently, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If the church of God on earth is one family, and a part of the great family which is in heaven; if even the angels are willing to be ranked with the ſaints below, as members of the ſame houſehold, and employed as fellow ſervants with them, and even as miniſtering ſpirits to them; how unchriſtian, how unheavenly, are pride, contention, diſunion and ſeparation among profeſſed believers! How contrary are ſuch tempers to their character as children of that Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named! This is a thought which our Apoſtle often ſuggeſts, and which meets us in almoſt every paragraph of this excellent epiſtle.

3. If we are God's family, how careful ſhould we be to attend on the orders of his houſe?

Angels and ſaints worſhip God, day and night, in his temple above. It is their joy to come into his preſence, bow themſelves before him, receive and execute his commands, and celebrate his perfections and works. Let us here imitate their zeal, devotion and piety, that we may be better prepared to join with them hereafter. They who contemptuouſly forſake the worſhip, and careleſsly neglect the ordinances of God's houſe, abſurdly profeſs to be the children of the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

4. Let thoſe who are not of this family be ſolicitous to obtain a place in it.

Unleſs you become members of it here on earth, you cannot expect admiſſion into it in heaven. The door of God's houſe is now open. He ſends forth his ſervants to compel you to come in, that his houſe may be filled. But know, this door will not ſtand open always. When, by the order of the maſter of the houſe, the door ſhall be ſhut, you

will in vain ſtand without and knock at the door, ſaying, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" for he will anſwer, "I know you not whence you are."

While you live in the indulgence of your ſins, you are far from God; you have no portion in the bleſſings deſigned for his family. You muſt be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind, before you can become fellow citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſehold of God, and be incorporated with his family in heaven. He now invites you to come in, and take a place among his children. Thoſe who come he will graciouſly receive, and freely love. But if you ſpurn this kind invitation, and chooſe ſtill to remain in the ſociety of the ungodly, you will forever be excluded from the fellowſhip of ſaints and angels, and finally be turned over into the place prepared, in God's juſtice, for the puniſhment of rebellious ſpirits.

5. Let ſuch as profeſs to be of God's family, walk as becomes ſo honorable a relation.

Let them emulate the temper of the bleſſed above, and aſpire to that perfection, which makes them bleſſed. Let them ſeek a nearer conformity to, and cloſer union with that branch of their family, which is already in heaven. And let them daily bow their knees to him, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, "That he would grant them to be ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Chriſt may dwell in their hearts by faith, and that, being rooted and grounded in love, they may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, and may be filled with all the fulneſs of God."

SERMON XX.

EPHESIANS iii. 14——19.

For this cauſe I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt ——— that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Chriſt may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge, and that ye may be filled with all the fulneſs of God.

THE Apoſtle, now in bonds for the goſpel, was concerned for his new converts in Epheſus, leſt, diſheartened by the perſecutions which had befallen *him*, and which threatened *them*, they ſhould turn away from the faith: He cautions them, that they faint not at his tribulations; and, for their encouragement, he tells them, that he remembered them in his prayers, and bowed his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in their behalf. The things which he principally requeſted for them, are related in the words which have juſt been read: That they might be ſtrengthened in the inner man—that Chriſt might dwell in their hearts—that they might be rooted and grounded in love

—that they might comprehend the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge—and that they might be filled with all the fulneſs of God.

Theſe things will be the ſubject of our preſent meditations. And while we contemplate the bleſſings which Paul ſought for the Epheſians, let us ſeek the ſame for ourſelves.

I. He prays, that "God would grant them, according to the riches of his glory, to be ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

It was not bodily ſtrength, civil power or worldly diſtinction, which the Apoſtle requeſted for theſe Chriſtians; it was ſomething far more deſirable: —It was the ſtrength, which belongs to the inner man—which comes from God's Spirit—which is granted according to the riches of his glory.

It was the grace of fortitude and patience, that they might perſevere in religion, whatever dangers and difficulties ſhould meet them. Thus our Apoſtle prays for the Coloſſians, "that they may be ſtrengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and longſuffering with joyfulneſs."

Chriſtians, weak in themſelves, need the power of Chriſt to reſt upon them. In the courſe of the religious life, they are expoſed to dangerous temptations, exerciſed with great afflictions, and called to difficult ſervices. In ſuch caſes they have peculiar need of ſtrength in the inner man.

We are to obtain this ſtrength by "bowing the knee to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." If it comes from his Spirit and from the riches of his glory, we muſt truſt in him and look to him for it. That we may hope and aſk with greater confidence, we ſhould contemplate his wiſdom, goodneſs, power and faithfulneſs, our paſt experience of his care and love, and eſpecially his wonderful grace diſplayed in the goſpel diſpenſation.

That we may obtain a ſupply of ſtrength, we muſt watch over our hearts, ſhun known temptations, avoid foreſeen dangers, and mortify thoſe luſts which war againſt the ſoul. And that we may know how to ſuit our prayers to our wants, we muſt be converſant with ourſelves, and gain an intimate acquaintance with our ſpiritual ſtate.—— The better we know ourſelves, the better we can judge what to pray for, the more we ſhall abound in matter of prayer, and the more eaſily we ſhall pour out our hearts before God. Our barrenneſs and deadneſs in prayer are greatly owing to our ignorance of, and inattention to ourſelves.

II. The next thing which Paul requeſts for the Epheſians is, that "Chriſt may dwell in their hearts by faith." The ſame ſentiment he expreſſes in his exhortation to the Coloſſians. "As ye have received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him, built up in him, and eſtabliſhed in the faith as ye have been taught."

The phraſe of "Chriſt's being in us," is often uſed to expreſs our *conformity* to him. He is then in us, when his word takes poſſeſſion of our hearts and governs our lives; and when, having the ſame mind as was in him, we walk as he walked.

The phraſe of "Chriſt's *dwelling* in us," imports *conſtancy* and *perſeverance*. They only, in whom his word *abides*, are his real diſciples.

As we become united to Chriſt by faith, ſo by faith he dwells in our hearts. "The juſt live by faith." That we may ſteadily maintain our obedience to his laws and our imitation of his character, we muſt walk by faith in his grace and power. The Apoſtle ſays, "I am crucified with Chriſt, nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life, which I live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himſelf for me."—"His word works effectually in them who believe."—"The word preached will not

profit unleſs it be mixed with faith in them who hear it."

To judge whether we are accepted of God, we muſt inquire whether Chriſt dwells in us—whether we are conformed to his character, influenced by his doctrines, and governed by his precepts. The reality of our faith is beſt proved by our conſtancy in the love and practice of religion. It is not ſafe to conclude that we are juſtified unto life, before we have time to inquire whether Chriſt thus dwells in our hearts by faith. There is nothing more contrary to the inſtructions and cautions of the goſpel, than ſtrong and bold concluſions in our own favor, before we have the evidence which ariſes from the efficacy of faith in purifying the heart. It is the *work* of faith, the *labor* of love, the *patience* of hope, and the *fruit* of godly ſorrow, which manifeſt the exiſtence of theſe graces in the ſoul.

III. The Apoſtle prays, that the Epheſian Chriſtians "may be rooted and grounded in love."

By love he doubtleſs intends love to *Chriſt*, who is the object mentioned immediately before and after. Love to Chriſt is one of the great principles of religion. If any man love not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, he is pronounced accurſed. But grace is promiſed to them, who love him in ſincerity.

This love is not merely an emotion of the heart on a view of the great things which Chriſt has done and ſuffered: It is a temper in the ſoul leading us to approve of him, delight in him, and cleave to him in his whole character, as a teacher, ruler and redeemer. It includes a love of his example, doctrines and precepts, as well as gratitude for his mediation, and rejoicing in the hope of his ſalvation.

True love to Chriſt is *Supreme*; it ſurpaſſes all earthly affections. He has ſaid, "whoſoever loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." The genuine effect of this love is *obedience*.

"If ye love me," ſays our Lord, "keep my commandments."—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I have commanded you."

Where love to Chriſt reigns, there will be a hatred of ſin and watchfulneſs againſt it. "They who are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh." There will be a high admiration of and ready compliance with the way of ſalvation through him. The believer "counts all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt, and ſuffers the loſs of all things to win him." There will be a concern to promote his honor and intereſt in the world. Peter was to teſtify his love to his Lord by feeding his flock.

Chriſtians are to be "*rooted* and *grounded* in love." True love is rooted in the heart. It is an habitual temper diſcovering itſelf in the fruits of holineſs. Where this love is rooted, there is an acquaintance with the religion of Chriſt, a ſettled belief of its divinity, and a high eſteem of its excellence and importance; and this love will be accompanied with a ſteady reſolution to abide in the doctrine of Chriſt, whatever dangers may attend it. —He only who cleaves to the Lord with purpoſe of heart, can be ſaid to be rooted and grounded in love.

Imagine not, that love to Chriſt is a mere ſenſitive affection, like that which we ſometimes feel toward natural objects; or that it is a tranſient emotion excited merely by a view of Chriſt, as a man ſuffering unjuſtly from the hands of cruel enemies; or only a delightful ſenſation ariſing from an apprehenſion of him as one who loves us and is ready to ſave us. Such feelings are no more than what wicked men may have under certain circumſtances. They come far ſhort of that love which the goſpel requires. *This* is nothing leſs than a love of Chriſt's complete character—a love of his whole goſpel—a love of the way in which ſalvation is offered. It

is a holy temper correſponding with the holy nature of its object. It is a ſpiritual affection toward Chriſt viewed as a ſpiritual Savior. Its fruits are love to good men—imitation of Chriſt's example—obedience to his commands—attendance on his inſtitutions—zeal for his honor—and diligence in his ſervice.

IV. Another petition for theſe Epheſian converts is "that they may be able to comprehend, with all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge."

All that Chriſt has done and ſuffered in our cauſe, is in no degree the effect of our deſert, but wholly the fruit of his own pure benevolence.—"He *loved* us and gave himſelf for us."—"Hereby perceive we his *love*, becauſe he laid down his life for our ſakes."

This love paſſes our knowledge; it exceeds our comprehenſion; but there is a ſenſe in which we may know it, and ſhould endeavor, with all ſaints, more and more to comprehend it.

1. The love of Chriſt paſſeth knowledge.

It paſſes all *known examples* of love. The prophet, ſpeaking of the love of God manifeſted in the forgiveneſs of ſinners, ſays, "His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts: But as the heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts."

Great inſtances of goodneſs have now and then been known among men. The parent for his children—one friend for another has done and ſuffered much. The parent who is evil can give good things to his children. For a good man peradventure ſome would dare to die. This, however, is the higheſt exertion of human love, that a man lay down his life for his friend. But the love of Chriſt far exceeds this: He has commended his love to-

ward us, in that, while we were ſinners and enemies, he died for us."

This love paſſes our *comprehenſion.* We may have a juſt conception of it; but we cannot comprehend its dimenſions. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge."

It paſſes knowledge in reſpect of its *breadth*, or *extent.* It, in ſome reſpects, extends to the whole world—to all nations in all ages, from Adam down to the cloſe of the human ſucceſſion. The benefits which it has procured, are offered to all on the ſame terms, without any diſtinction. They are not confined to this or that people, or to this or that period, or to any particular deſcription or character; but are to all, and upon all them who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, male or female, bond or free, young or old, great ſinners or ſmall; and there is no difference.

Yea; this love extends, not only to men, but to angels, who look with pleaſure into the wonders of redemption, and learn from the church the manifold wiſdom of God. All things, which are in heaven and in earth, are to be gathered together in Chriſt and to become one family. Hence the angels are repreſented as joining with the elders in this ſong of praiſe to the Lamb. "Thou art worthy—for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy blood—."

How vaſt is the breadth of Chriſt's love! What myriads of the human race, in the long ſucceſſion from the firſt to the laſt generation of mortals, will be made partakers of it? Many indeed will periſh, but the nations of them who are ſaved, will be ſuch multitudes as no man can number. And beſides theſe, there is an innumerable company of angels —ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands, who worſhip the Redeemer and give honor to his name.

The love of Chriſt paſſes knowledge, in reſpect of its *length*. It is an *everlaſting* love. Believers are choſen of God in him before all ages, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love. He from the days of eternity entered into a covenant of peace with God, in which he engaged to make his ſoul an offering for ſin, and received a promiſe, that he ſhould ſee his ſeed, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhould proſper in his hands. This engagement he in the fulneſs of time executed, by aſſuming our fleſh and bearing our ſins on the croſs. —The ſalvation which his death has purchaſed for believers is an *everlaſting* ſalvation. As his thoughts of love were from eternity, ſo the effects of his love will laſt to eternity.

The *depth* of Chriſt's love paſſes knowledge. In his unbounded compaſſion to our race, he laid aſide his divine form—his heavenly glory—made himſelf of no reputation—took on him the faſhion of a man—the form of a ſervant—and humbled himſelf to death, even the death of the croſs. Can we conceive what he ſuffered for our ſakes, when his ſoul was filled with ſorrow, his frame convulſed with pain, his ſweat like drops of blood, his limbs diſtended on the tree, his hands and feet pierced with nails, and his ſide with a ſpear, and his voice raiſed to heaven in this ſtrong and bitter cry, "My God, my God, why has thou forſaken me? O the depth of that love which brought the Son of God from heaven to ſuch a depth of humiliation and diſtreſs! Again: The *height* of Chriſt's love paſſes knowledge. Being exalted to the higheſt heavens, he employs himſelf in works of love and grace.—He intercedes for them who come to God in his name—he diſpenſes the heavenly gifts which he has received for men—he watches over his church, and ſheds down his gracious influence for her preſervation and increaſe.

His love paſſes knowledge, as the *benefits* which it has procured exceed all human eſtimation. The Apoſtle preached "the *unſearchable* riches of Chriſt." —Who can conceive the value of that pardon, the worth of that ſalvation, and the glory of that inheritance, which he has purchaſed for the ſaints? Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." This "peace of God paſſeth all underſtanding."—"Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

2. Though the love of Chriſt paſſeth knowledge, yet there is a ſenſe in which it is *known to the ſaints.*

They have a *thankful* and *admiring* knowledge of that love, which moved ſo glorious a perſon to humble himſelf ſo low, and to do and ſuffer ſo much for creatures ſo worthleſs—ſo guilty. When they conſider the heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and ſtars which he has ordained, they ſay with David, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the ſon of man that thou viſiteſt him?

They have an *experimental* knowledge of his love. They not only view it as a ſubject of pleaſing contemplation, but feel the power of it on their hearts. By the love of Chriſt they have been made partakers of the renewing influences of the Spirit, wrought to the temper of the goſpel, and intereſted in its bleſſings. The Apoſtle ſays, "We were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another: But after the *kindneſs* and *love* of God our *Savior* toward man appeared, not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us, by the waſhing of regeneration and renewing of the holy Ghoſt, which he has ſhed on us abundantly through Je-

ſus Chriſt, that, being juſtified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Believers have an *influential* knowledge of Chriſt's love. The Apoſtle ſays, "The love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they, which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him that died and roſe again."

The ſaints have an *aſſimilating* knowledge of their Savior's love. Though they cannot comprehend the dimenſions of his love, yet they are, in a meaſure, poſſeſſed of the ſame kind of love. They are, as he was, meek, gentle, patient and ready to forgive. They have learnt of him, to love their enemies, to pray for thoſe who deſpitefully uſe them, to bleſs them that curſe, to bear revilings without returning them, to condeſcend to men of low eſtate, to pity the diſtreſſed, and do good as there is occaſion. This is Chriſt's command to his diſciples, "Love one another, as I have loved you."

The Apoſtle's prayer for the Epheſians was, that "they might be *ſtrengthened* to comprehend the love of Chriſt."

This is an inexhauſtible ſubject. The riches of it are unſearchable. We may dwell upon it with freſh entertainment and increaſing pleaſure while we live: Yea, eternity will not wear out the theme. This is the ſong of the ſaints in heaven, "Unto him who *loved* us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Let us labor for a greater experimental knowledge of his love. If we are in a ſtate of ſin, let us ſeek from him that grace which is neceſſary to renew us in knowledge after his holy character. If we are in doubt concerning our intereſt in his love, let us not reſt, till he is formed in us. If we find



at he dwells in our hearts by faith, let us grow in all things into him, and aſpire to the meaſe of his divine fulneſs. This leads us to obve,

V. The Apoſtle prays, that the Epheſians "might filled with all the fulneſs of God." His meang is, that they might have ſuch a ſupply of dire influence, as would cauſe them to abound in owledge, faith, love, and all virtues and good rks. He prays, in like manner, for the Coloſns, "that they might be filled with the knowlge of God's will in all wiſdom and ſpiritual unrſtanding, and might walk worthy of the Lord all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, creaſing in the knowledge of God—and that their arts might be comforted, being knit together in ve, and to all riches of the full aſſurance of unerſtanding." And for the Philippians, "that od, who had begun a good work in them, would erform it to the day of Chriſt; and that they ight abound more and more in love and in knowlge, being filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs."

From theſe petitions we ſee, that, "by the fulleſs of God," the Apoſtle intends ſuch a rich ſupply of the grace of God, that they might be able to erſevere in the faith and practice of religion, to ncreaſe and abound more and more in the virtues nd works of the goſpel, and to obtain a more full ſurance of their title to heavenly glory.

We learn then that Chriſtians are not to content hemſelves with their preſent attainments, but to ſpire after greater eminence in their holy charaer, and nearer approaches to heavenly perfection. n imitation of Paul's example, they muſt "forget he things which are behind, and reach forward to he things which are before, preſſing toward the nark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." They muſt never indulge an imagnation, that they have acquired as much holineſs,

or done as much ſervice as is needful; but, deeply humbled under a ſenſe of their great imperfections and remaining corruptions, the poorneſs of their ſervices, and their defects in duty, they muſt daily renew their application to God's mercy for the pardon of their ſins, and to his grace for their aſſiſtance in the religious life. Their deſires muſt not ſtop ſhort of that which the Apoſtle aſked for his converts, that they may be ſtrengthened by the ſpirit in the inner man—may have Chriſt dwelling in their hearts—may be rooted and grounded in love—may know the love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge, and may be filled with all the fulneſs of God.



SERMON XXI.

EPHESIANS iii. 20, 21.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Jeſus Chriſt, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

IN the ſix preceding verſes the Apoſtle informs the Epheſians, what bleſſings he requeſted for them. He bowed his knees in prayer unto the Father of Jeſus Chriſt, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant them to be ſtrengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man—that Chriſt might dwell in their hearts by faith—that they might be rooted and grounded in love—that they might be able to comprehend, with all ſaints, the vaſt dimenſions of Chriſt's love to them—and that they might be filled with all needful ſupplies of the grace of God. While he meditates on the breadth and length, the depth and heighth of the love of Chriſt, and on thoſe full ſupplies of grace, which flow to ſaints from the divine fountain, he breaks forth into the devout doxology, which I have now read. In this, he firſt acknowledges the infinite power of God to do for us far beyond our petitions or

thoughts: And then he prays, that all glory may be given to God in the church through all ages.

I. We will, firſt, conſider the acknowledgment, which the Apoſtle makes, of God's all ſufficiency. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or think."

God's *ability* intends not merely his *power*, but all thoſe perfections which render him a ſuitable object of our faith in prayer. It imports an exact knowledge what our wants are, a ready diſpoſition to ſupply them, wiſdom to diſcern the proper time and manner of granting ſupplies, as well as power to effect whatever his wiſdom ſees beſt to be done.

Divine power or ability is often, in ſcripture, conſidered as including wiſdom and goodneſs; for indeed, without theſe, there could be no ſuch thing as power, properly ſo called. Moſes, in his interceſſion for Iſrael, ſays, "If thou ſhalt kill all this people, the nations will ſpeak, ſaying, Becauſe the Lord was not *able* to bring them into the land which he ſware to them, therefore hath he ſlain them in the wilderneſs. Now I beſeech thee, let the *power* of my Lord be great according as thou haſt ſpoken, ſaying, The Lord is *long ſuffering* and of great *mercy*. Pardon I beſeech thee the iniquity of this people according to the *greatneſs* of thy *mercy*." The Apoſtle ſays to the Corinthians, God is *able* to make all *grace* abound toward you, that ye always, having all ſufficiency in all things, may abound in every good work." He ſays to the elders of Epheſus, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his *grace*, which is *able* to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are ſanctified." His great conſolation under a ſenſe of weakneſs was, that the *grace* of Chriſt was *ſufficient* for him, and that the *ſtrength* of Chriſt was made perfect in human *weakneſs*. He therefore took pleaſure in *infirmities*, that the *power* of Chriſt might reſt upon him.

In theſe and other paſſages, the power or ſufficiency of God to ſupply our wants manifeſtly includes his abundant goodneſs and mercy. And it is particularly in reference to the *riches* of his *glory*, and to the *incomprehenſible* dimenſions of his *love*, that the Apoſtle ſays in the text, "He is *able* to do exceeding abundantly above all that we aſk or think."

If we conſider our own imperfection, and the boundleſs perfection of the Deity, it will appear, that there is no proportion between what we can aſk, and what he can do. It is impoſſible, that creatures of ſuch limited minds as ours, ſhould comprehend all the things which perfect wiſdom may deviſe, unbounded goodneſs may deſign, and infinite power may effect. As the nature, perfections and operations of the divine Being are infinitely ſuperior to the powers which we poſſeſs, and the works which we can perform, ſo we muſt believe, that he is able to do exceedingly better for us than we requeſt in our prayers, or imagine in our thoughts.

To illuſtrate this point, it may be obſerved,

1. God often does for men thoſe *favors*, which they never thought of aſking for themſelves. He is found of them who ſought him not: Before they call, he hears them; he ſhews them great things, which they knew not of.

Our happineſs, in many caſes, depends on things which are entirely out of our ſight. We know not what is good for a man in this life, all the days of this vain life which he ſpends as a ſhadow. But the perfect wiſdom of God ſees all the connexions and dependences of things through the boundleſs extent of the univerſe, and the endleſs duration of eternity; the relation of every creature to other beings around him; and the influence that every event will have on his happineſs or miſery. That Providence, which God exerciſes in the world, is

guided, in every ſtep, by this conſummate—this all comprehenſive wiſdom; and as it is particularly employed for the benefit of pious men, to whom all things ſhall work for good, ſo undoubtedly there are innumerable caſes, in which God orders circumſtances and events in their favor, without their requeſt or knowledge. In ſome inſtances they are able afterward to diſcover the happy conſequences of events, which, in the time of them, appeared quite indifferent, or perhaps very unfavorable to their intereſt. And, without queſtion, there are numberleſs caſes, in which their ſafety is owing to cauſes, which they never will diſcover, until the myſterious ſcenes of Providence ſhall be opened to their grateful and aſtoniſhing view in the future world.

2. God anſwers prayer in *ways* that we think not of.

As he requires us to make known to him our requeſts, ſo he aſſures us, that his ears are open to them. He will not always beſtow the particular things which we aſk, for we often miſtake our own intereſt; but he will grant us things more valuable in themſelves, or better adapted to our condition. Or, if he gives us the bleſſings in ſubſtance, he will ſend them in a more ſuitable time and manner, than we had propoſed. Paul's prayer for the removal of an infirmity, which ſeemed an obſtruction to his miniſterial ſucceſs, was anſwered in a way far better than he aſked or imagined. Sufficient grace was afforded him, not only to comfort him under his peculiar trial, but to give him greater ſucceſs in his miniſtry, than he could have expected, if the infirmity had been removed.

Pious Jacob doubtleſs often prayed for the proſperity of his children, eſpecially of Joſeph, concerning whom he had conceived peculiar hopes.—But the patriarch had no conception of the dignity to which this ſon would be advanced, nor of the

uſeful ſphere in which he would move; much leſs did he imagine, by what myſterious methods God would raiſe him to ſuch diſtinguiſhed importance, and make him inſtrumental of general good to mankind. The courſe of Providence ſeemed, for a time, to be againſt him; but eventually it appeared to be deſigned for his own and the common felicity.

I remember to have heard, on good authority, a remarkable ſtory of an *African*, which will illuſtrate this thought. The poor negro, in his own country, was led, by contemplation on the works of nature, to conceive that there muſt be, though inviſible to him, a ſupreme, all powerful, wiſe, juſt and good Being, who made and governed the world.—Impreſſed with this ſentiment, he uſed daily to pray to this inviſible Being, that he might, by ſome means or other, be brought to a more diſtinct knowledge of him, and of the ſervice due to him.——. While he was in this contemplative and devout ſtate of mind, he, with a number of others, was treacherouſly and perfidiouſly taken by ſome of his own countrymen, and ſoon after was ſold for a ſlave. Now his faith began to waver, "For," thought he with himſelf, "if there is ſuch a juſt and good Being, as I have ſuppoſed, who governs the world, how is it poſſible, that fraud and iniquity ſhould be ſucceſsful againſt innocence and integrity? Why am I and my fellow priſoners, who have acted with openneſs and ſimplicity, made to ſuffer, while our enemies are permitted to triumph in the ſucceſs of their deceit and violence?"——The poor fellow, after ſeveral changes of maſters, was finally ſold into a pious family in New-england, where he was carefully inſtructed in the Chriſtian religion, which he embraced with great appearance of ſincerity and joy, and obeyed with exemplary diligence and zeal. And, in the relation of his ſtory, he often made this pious reflec-

neſs and demerit of our numerous offences committed againſt this glorious Being; and, conſequently, but a very imperfect ſenſe of the immenſity of that mercy which they receive, whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins are covered.—When we aſk pardon, we aſk that which abundantly exceeds all our thoughts.

The happineſs of heaven as much ſurpaſſes our ideas, as does the demerit of ſin. We know it to be ſomething great and good. We raiſe our apprehenſions of it by contemplating the ſublime deſcriptions which we find in the ſacred pages. We think how deſirable it is to dwell in the glorious preſence of God—to enjoy his favor continually—to ſerve him without interruption—to be free from ſin, temptation, fear and pain—to mingle with pure and happy ſpirits in ſocial devotion and reciprocal love—to be releaſed from all our preſent perplexities and doubts—to be conſtantly improving in knowledge and virtue—to have our minds more and more enlarged, our holy deſires exalted, and all our wants ſupplied. We aid our conceptions of the heavenly world by attending to the images and metaphors of ſcripture. We think of thrones, crowns, kingdoms, glories, honors, riches, joys complete and pleaſures everlaſting. But after all, "eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The bleſſings which the goſpel offers are *eternal*: And *eternity* is an idea much too big for mortals to receive. We can only view it by parts; and yet parts it hath none. We add years to years, and ages to ages, till imagination is overwhelmed; but after the utmoſt ſtretch of thought, the object is ſtill ungraſped. Since boundleſs duration belongs to the bleſſings which we aſk, we aſk more than we can think. When we pray for the pardon of ſin—peace with God—ſanctifying grace—admiſ-

ſion into heaven, we aſk things which God can give; but which we cannot comprehend.

Now if God is able to do thus abundantly for us, how confidently may we rely on him in all our ſtraits—how cheerfully may we apply to him in all our wants? Filled with a ſenſe of the divine power and goodneſs, the prophet ſays, "Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; the flocks ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my ſalvation." St. Paul's conſolation in all his dangers, and in the view of death was this; "I know whom I have believed, and I am perſuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." This was the ground of that noble fortitude with which the youths in Babylon deſpiſed the terrors of the furnace: "The God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us."

If we believe that a Being of perfect wiſdom, power and goodneſs governs the world, we have no occaſion for anxiety; we may caſt our cares on him. If he is for us, Who can be againſt us? If he defends us, Who can harm us? If he ſuſtains us, What can depreſs us? If he diſpoſes our condition, What can happen amiſs? Our only concern ſhould be to ſecure his favor, and ſtand approved in his ſight. Conſcious of the integrity of our hearts, we may be joyful in all circumſtances, and preſerve a ſerenity of ſpirit amidſt all changes.

When we meet with adverſities, let us contemplate the wiſdom, power and goodneſs of that Being, who marvelouſly turns to good, the things which look like evil, and overrules for the benefit of the godly the events which wear the deadlieſt aſpect.

tion, that while he was perplexed to ſee the triumph of fraud over innocence, God was really anſwering his fervent prayers, and bringing him to the enjoyment of the means of religious knowledge and eternal ſalvation—that what he had thought was an objection againſt the juſtice of Providence, was really a wonderful and merciful compliance with his daily ſupplication. To proceed,

3. The mercies which God is pleaſed to grant us, often produce happy *conſequences* far beyond what we *aſked* or *thought*.

In our prayers, our thoughts uſually ſtop at the enjoyment of the bleſſing requeſted. God's gracious deſign, in the beſtowment of the bleſſing, reaches forward to a long ſeries of happy events, which ſtand connected with it. We ſometimes aſk we know not what; and God, whoſe wiſdom judges right, does exceedingly better for us than we aſk —he denies our prayer. If what we have aſked be a real favor, it may probably compriſe abundantly more than we think. It may be pregnant of conſequences, which we cannot foreſee, or even imagine. When Saul, the blaſphemer and perſecutor, was converted to the faith of Chriſt, he certainly viewed himſelf as having obtained a high favor—a favor of more value than all the riches and honors of the univerſe. But this happy convert could have no conception of the intereſting conſequences of his converſion to the world of mankind, in that and all ſucceeding generations. At firſt his thoughts were chiefly employed in his own deliverance from guilt. But afterward, when he became more acquainted with the gracious purpoſes of God in his converſion, he made this admiring reflection; "I for this cauſe obtained mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all longſuffering for a pattern to them, that ſhould afterward believe in him to life everlaſting. To God be honor and glory for ever and ever." The

Apoſtle obſerves, that, in the myſterious workings of Providence, the unbelief of the Jews was the occaſion of a more general converſion of the Gentiles; and on the other hand, the faith of the Gentiles, in ſome future period, will prove the means of reclaiming the unbelieving Jews. He ſays to the Roman converts, "Ye have obtained mercy through their unbelief, that through your mercy they may obtain mercy.——O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or Who hath been his counſellor? Of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever."

4. The *worth* of the bleſſings, which we aſk and God beſtows, infinitely exceeds all our thoughts.

The bleſſings of the goſpel are "unſearchable riches." They are purchaſed with an infinite price —not with corruptible things, ſuch as ſilver and gold, but with the precious blood of Chriſt. Bleſſings purchaſed at ſuch a price muſt be of immenſe value.—We can form no perfect eſtimation of their worth in themſelves, or of their importance to us.

The ſinner, awakened to a ſenſe of his guilt, knows pardon and heaven to be vaſtly more deſirable than all the treaſures of the earth. He views them as pearls of great price, to purchaſe which he would ſell all that he has. In compariſon with them he counts his worldly wealth as dung; and to win them he would cheerfully ſuffer the loſs of all things. While he meditates on the evil of ſin and its dreadful demerit, he feels ardent and increaſing deſires of God's forgiving and ſaving mercy. But all his deſires—all his thoughts ſink far below the worth of the object.

As we have no adequate conception of the purity and dignity of the Supreme Jehovah, ſo we can have no full apprehenſion of the exceeding ſinful-

neſs and demerit of our numerous offences committed againſt this glorious Being; and, conſequently, but a very imperfect ſenſe of the immenſity of that mercy which they receive, whoſe iniquities are forgiven, and whoſe ſins are covered.—When we aſk pardon, we aſk that which abundantly exceeds all our thoughts.

The happineſs of heaven as much ſurpaſſes our ideas, as does the demerit of ſin. We know it to be ſomething great and good. We raiſe our apprehenſions of it by contemplating the ſublime deſcriptions which we find in the ſacred pages. We think how deſirable it is to dwell in the glorious preſence of God—to enjoy his favor continually—to ſerve him without interruption—to be free from ſin, temptation, fear and pain—to mingle with pure and happy ſpirits in ſocial devotion and reciprocal love—to be releaſed from all our preſent perplexities and doubts—to be conſtantly improving in knowledge and virtue—to have our minds more and more enlarged, our holy deſires exalted, and all our wants ſupplied. We aid our conceptions of the heavenly world by attending to the images and metaphors of ſcripture. We think of thrones, crowns, kingdoms, glories, honors, riches, joys complete and pleaſures everlaſting. But after all, "eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The bleſſings which the goſpel offers are *eternal*: And *eternity* is an idea much too big for mortals to receive. We can only view it by parts; and yet parts it hath none. We add years to years, and ages to ages, till imagination is overwhelmed; but after the utmoſt ſtretch of thought, the object is ſtill ungraſped. Since boundleſs duration belongs to the bleſſings which we aſk, we aſk more than we can think. When we pray for the pardon of ſin—peace with God—ſanctifying grace—admiſ-

ſion into heaven, we aſk things which God can give; but which we cannot comprehend.

Now if God is able to do thus abundantly for us, how confidently may we rely on him in all our ſtraits—how cheerfully may we apply to him in all our wants? Filled with a ſenſe of the divine power and goodneſs, the prophet ſays, "Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; the flocks ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my ſalvation." St. Paul's conſolation in all his dangers, and in the view of death was this; "I know whom I have believed, and I am perſuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." This was the ground of that noble fortitude with which the youths in Babylon deſpiſed the terrors of the furnace: "The God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us."

If we believe that a Being of perfect wiſdom, power and goodneſs governs the world, we have no occaſion for anxiety; we may caſt our cares on him. If he is for us, Who can be againſt us? If he defends us, Who can harm us? If he ſuſtains us, What can depreſs us? If he diſpoſes our condition, What can happen amiſs? Our only concern ſhould be to ſecure his favor, and ſtand approved in his ſight. Conſcious of the integrity of our hearts, we may be joyful in all circumſtances, and preſerve a ſerenity of ſpirit amidſt all changes.

When we meet with adverſities, let us contemplate the wiſdom, power and goodneſs of that Being, who marvellouſly turns to good, the things which look like evil, and overrules for the benefit of the godly the events which wear the deadlieſt aſpect.

While we view ourſelves as in the hands and under the care of ſuch a Being, we may deſpiſe the terrors of the world, and riſe ſuperior to temptation, adverſity and death. "I have ſet the Lord always before me; becauſe he is at my right hand, I ſhall not be moved."—"Though I walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death, I will fear no evil, for God is with me."—"God is our ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble; therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed out of its place, and though the mountains be carried into the midſt of the ſea."

With what delightful confidence may we approach to God in prayer? We feel a thouſand wants, which we are unable to ſupply. We look around, and ſoon perceive the vanity of human help. But deſpairing here, we can with courage go and tell our wants to God, who is able to do more than we aſk. We are conſcious of great unworthineſs; but his grace can abound more than even our ſins have abounded. It is impoſſible we ſhould aſk as much as his goodneſs, wiſdom and power can do. How inexcuſable are they, who live prayerleſs in the preſence of ſuch a Being?

What glorious hopes may Chriſtians entertain? ——Of the happineſs which awaits the godly, the goſpel gives us moſt exalted deſcriptions. But after the higheſt conceptions, which, by the help of theſe deſcriptions, we form of future happineſs, ſtill it is ſomething, which abundantly exceeds all that we think. Let us then be patient in tribulation, joyful in hope, inſtant in prayer, and zealous of good works; for our labor and patience will not be vain—our prayers and hopes will not be diſappointed. Greater and more glorious things await us, than we ever have aſked, or now can think.

But, on the other hand, let us remember, that God is able to deſtroy, as well as to ſave. And as the happineſs which awaits the juſt, ſo the miſery

which threatens the impenitent, will vaſtly exceed all previous apprehenſions. Sinners will periſh with a wonderful deſtruction—a deſtruction which they would not believe, though one ſhould declare it to them. They will be puniſhed by that God, whoſe power is infinite—yea, puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the glory of his power.—And who knows the power of his anger? Who can conceive the ſeverity of that puniſhment, which anger, armed with omnipotence, will execute on thoſe who have deſpiſed the riches of divine grace? If to offend againſt God's purity and juſtice is dangerous, How dreadful to offend againſt his mercy and love? If ſin by the commandment becomes exceedingly ſinful, How ſinful does it become by its oppoſition to the grace of the goſpel? They, who treat this with contempt, treaſure up unto themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath. And wrath will come on them to the uttermoſt. We proceed,

II. To conſider the aſcription of glory which the Apoſtle makes to this Allſufficient God. "To him be glory in the church throughout all ages."

As God is in himſelf a moſt glorious Being, we are bound to glorify him in our hearts, by juſt thoughts of him and ſuitable regards to him—to glorify him in our actions by an imitation of his goodneſs, and a ſteady obedience to his commands—to glorify him in our language by ſpeaking of him with reverence, and praiſing him for his benefits.

But what the Apoſtle here more eſpecially deſires is, that glory may be given to God in the church. God has predeſtinated us to the adoption of children, that we might be to the praiſe of the glory of his grace.

1. God is glorified by the *increaſe* of the church.

As a king is honored in the multitude of his obedient ſubjects, and in the voluntary immigrations

of many people into his dominions; ſo the glory of God's name is advanced on earth, when to his kingdom are made additions of ſuch as ſerve him in holineſs and righteouſneſs, and walk in his commandments and ordinances blameleſs. The prophet, ſpeaking of the happy increaſe of the church, ſays, "They ſhall come with acceptance on God's altar, and ſhall glorify the houſe of his glory." If, then, we would give glory to God in the church, let us invite and encourage many to come and join themſelves to him in a perpetual covenant. This is the Lord's direction to his diſciples, "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

2. God is glorified in the church, when a *devout regard* is generally paid to the *ordinances* which he has inſtituted.

The diſciples, who continued with one accord in the temple, are ſaid to have praiſed God; and they who offer praiſe glorify his name. As the church is formed for the ſocial worſhip of God, in prayer, praiſe and hearing of the word, ſo the beauty of it much conſiſts in the conſtant, regular and united attendance of Chriſtians on his appointed worſhip. They who forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together contradict the principal deſign for which the church was erected, and caſt a manifeſt reproach on the great head of it. Chriſtians are a peculiar people, a holy prieſthood, choſen to ſhew forth the praiſes of God; and they have obtained an inheritance in his church, that they ſhould be to the praiſe of his glory.

3. God is glorified by the obſervance of *good order* in the church, and by the decent attendance of the members on their reſpective duties.

This is the inſtruction given by St. Paul; "Having gifts differing according to the grace beſtowed on us, whether prophecy, let it be according to the

proportion of faith; or miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that giveth, let him do it with ſimplicity; or he that ruleth, with diligence; he that ſpeaketh, let him ſpeak as the oracles of God; and he that miniſtereth, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified."

Now if we break in on this order; if the teacher neglects the duty of teaching, and entangles himſelf in the affairs of this life; or if, forſaking the oracles of God; he teaches the commandments of men, or the imaginations of his own brain; or if the private Chriſtian aſſumes the teacher, and, vainly puffed up with a carnal mind, intrudes into thoſe things which he has not learned; or if the teacher, quitting his own proper charge, enters into other men's labors, and cauſes diviſions in the churches; then God is diſhonored, for he is a God of order, not of confuſion, in all churches of the ſaints.

4. That God may be glorified, there muſt be *peace* and *unity* in the church.

"Where envy and ſtrife are, there is confuſion and every evil work."—"Whatſoever ye do," ſays the Apoſtle, "do all to the glory of God, giving no offence, neither to Jew, nor Gentile, nor to the church of God."—"Be ye like minded one toward another according to Chriſt Jeſus, that ye may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify God."

If, then, a church becomes a ſcene of wrathful contentions—if there are in it whiſperings, ſwellings, tumults, mutual cenſures and reproaches, interruptions of religious communion, diviſions, ſeparations, and withdrawments from the ſtated worſhip; there is a total perverſion of the great deſign of its inſtitution, and the name of God and his doctrine are profaned.

5. That glory may be given to God in the church, there muſt be *exemplary holineſs* in its members.

Our Lord ſays, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit; ſo ſhall ye be my diſciples." The Apoſtle prays for the Philippians, "that they may be filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt, unto the glory and praiſe of God."

We, who, by our profeſſion, belong to the church of God, ought to be exceedingly careful, leſt by our unworthy behavior we diſhonor God, whom we are under every obligation to glorify. Let it be our prayer, that glory may be given to God in the church; eſpecially in that ſociety, of which we are members. Let us ſeek its increaſe by encouraging others to join themſelves to it. Let us walk in God's appointed ordinances blameleſs, not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together; but coming together into one place. Let us attend on our reſpective duties, and do good according to the ability which God has given us. Let us ſtudy the things which make for peace, and by which we may edify one another. Let us walk worthy of him, who has called us to his kingdom and glory, being fruitful in every good work, increaſing in the knowledge of God, eſtabliſhed in the faith, and abounding therein with thankſgiving.

Now unto God be glory in the church by Jeſus Chriſt, throughout all ages. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

EPHESIANS iv. 1——7.

I therefore, the priſoner of the Lord, beſeech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called, with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptiſm, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the meaſure of the gift of Chriſt.

WE ſee without ſurpriſe, that men differ in ſentiment about matters of a ſecular and civil nature; nor are we to expect a perfect uniformity in the things of religion. Its great doctrines and duties are indeed ſo plainly revealed, and ſo clearly expreſſed in the goſpel, that there has ſeldom been much controverſy about them among ſober Chriſtians; but in its ſpeculative and ceremonial parts a diverſity of opinion often takes place among thoſe, whom candor will eſteem to be good and upright ſouls.

This being the caſe, what is that temper and behavior which we owe to one another? Shall we

cenſure and condemn our brethren, withdraw from their communion, and exclude them from ours, for every ſuppoſed miſtake ?—No : Our Apoſtle inculcates another ſpirit, and draws a different line of conduct.

In general, we are to treat one another as becomes our Chriſtian character. Mutual love is the great diſtinctive badge of Chriſt's diſciples. To walk worthy of our vocation, is to walk in love. Some of the more important exerciſes of brotherly love the Apoſtle particularly enumerates in our text.

1. Walk *in all lowlineſs*, or humility.

Similar inſtructions often occur in the writings of the Apoſtles. "Let no man think of himſelf above that which he ought to think, but think *ſoberly* according as God hath dealt to every man the meaſure of faith. Let nothing be done through ſtrife or vain glory, but in *lowlineſs* of mind let each eſteem other better than himſelf. Put on *humbleneſs* of mind. Be ſubject one to another, and be clothed with *humility*.

Humble thoughts of ourſelves, of our own knowledge, goodneſs and importance, are neceſſary to chriſtian peace and union. "Only from pride cometh contention." They only who think themſelves holier than their brethren, and holier than they really are, will ſay to them, "Stand by yourſelves, come not near to us."

Walking in all lowlineſs, we ſhall not deſpiſe our brethren for their want of the internal gifts, or external advantages, which we enjoy; but remembering, who hath made us to differ from others, we ſhall charitably employ our ſuperior advantages for their edification and comfort.

We ſhall not lean to our own underſtanding; but, conſcious of our liableneſs to err, we ſhall be attentive to inſtruction and reproof, open to conviction, and ready to retract our errors, and con-

feſs our faults. We ſhall judge ourſelves with ſeverity, and our brethren with candor, and be diſpoſed to think them better than ourſelves. We ſhall rejoice in their proſperity, as well as be thankful for our own, and be ready to acknowledge their virtues, and to condemn our own tranſgreſſions. We ſhall not affect to be called maſters; but remember, that one is our maſter—even Chriſt, and that we are all brethren.

8. Walk—*in meekneſs.* This is a virtue nearly connected with humility. It principally conſiſts in a prudent reſtraint and government of the paſſions. While we walk in the ſpirit of the goſpel, we ſhall not be eaſily provoked; our reſentments will not be ſudden, without cauſe, or beyond bounds. We ſhall be diſpoſed to interpret in a favorable ſenſe, the doubtful words and actions of our brethren, and when we ſee them ſurpriſed, or drawn into a fault, we ſhall admit in their caſe all reaſonable excuſes and extenuations.

If a variance happens, we ſhall ſtand ready to be reconciled. We ſhall on eaſy terms forgive the offence, conſidering that our own ſelfiſh feelings may probably have overrated it. We ſhall not ſuffer anger to reſt in our boſoms, nor ſee the ſun to go down on our wrath.

We ſhall be cautious not to give, as well as ſlow to take offence. We ſhall be no brawlers, ſhall ſpeak evil of no man, but be gentle ſhewing all meekneſs to all men. We ſhall not behave ourſelves unſeemly, but courteouſly adapt our language and manners to the tempers of thoſe with whom we converſe, having our ſpeech always with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt, that we may know how we ought to anſwer every man.

In matters of religion our zeal will be tempered with charity. Though we ſhall be zealous of good works, and ſhall contend earneſtly for the faith delivered to the ſaints, yet we ſhall be gentle and

condeſcending in thoſe things, which are only circumſtantial, and which enter not into the eſſence of religion. We ſhall be candid and moderate in our treatment of different ſects, not condemning them in the groſs, nor imputing to them errors, which they diſavow; but hoping, that there may be integrity of heart, even where we ſee a miſguided judgment. We ſhall be ready, with meekneſs and fear, to give an anſwer to every man, who aſks us a reaſon of the hope that is in us; and with the ſame Spirit ſhall we receive their anſwer, when they give us a reaſon of the hope that is in them.

Such as offend, we ſhall reſtore in the Spirit of meekneſs, conſidering ourſelves, leſt we alſo be tempted. Such as oppoſe themſelves we ſhall in meekneſs inſtruct, praying that God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and we ſhall recommend religion to all men by ſhewing out of a good converſation our works with meekneſs of wiſdom.

3. To our meekneſs we muſt add *longſuffering* and *forbearance*.

Theſe terms expreſs the patient and exalted exerciſes of meekneſs, rather than virtues really diſtinct from it. We are not only to be meek, but longſuffering in our meekneſs—not only to reſtrain anger under ordinary offences; but to repreſs malice and forbear revenge under the higheſt and moſt provoking injuries. Charity ſuffers long, thinks no evil, endures all things and covers the multitude of ſins. It recompenſes to no man evil for evil, but overcomes evil with good. In the exerciſe of this forbearance and longſuffering, we ſhall highly approve and readily obey theſe precepts of our divine Lord. "If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times in a day turn to thee, ſaying, I repent, forgive him. And forgive, not only until ſeven times, but until ſeventy times ſeven."—"Reſiſt not evil; but who-

ſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other alſo. And if any man ſue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo. And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." But does our Savior require us to be unfeeling under injuries, and tamely ſubmiſſive to every inſolent brute? By no means. There are caſes in which we ought to ſeek redreſs of wrongs, and bring offenders to puniſhment. But ſmaller injuries in our reputation, property or liberty, had better paſs unnoticed, than be deeply laid to heart—had better be made the ſubject of private expoſtulation, than of public animadverſion—had better be borne for the ſake of peace, than proſecuted at its expenſe. And however great the injuries may ſeem, redreſs muſt be ſought with the ſpirit of meekneſs and love; not with the temper of malice and revenge. Thus our Lord ſubjoins, "Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who deſpitefully uſe and perſecute you—be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven, is perfect."

4. We muſt *endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

It is not unity of *opinion*, which the Apoſtle recommends; this is not poſſible to be obtained, nor reaſonable to be expected in the preſent ſtate of mankind: But it is unity of *Spirit*, of heart, and affection, diſpoſing us to preſerve the bond of peace, and to maintain all the duties of Chriſtian fellowſhip, whatever differences of ſentiment may take place. To the ſame purpoſe are his exhortations to all the churches; and eſpecially to thoſe, in which a diverſity of opinion concerning ceremonial uſages threatened their internal peace.—"Bear the infirmities of the weak. Let every one pleaſe his neighbor for his good to edification—Be ye like minded one toward another, that ye

may with one mind and one mouth, glorify God. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be of one accord, of one mind—let there be no diviſions among you, but live in peace." He teaches us to regard all as our fellow Chriſtians, who call on the name of Jeſus our Lord, both theirs and ours, who appear to be members of Chriſt's body, partakers of his Spirit and ſubject to his government; and he cautions us, that we reject not thoſe, whom God has received. To juſtify ourſelves in excluding Chriſtian profeſſors from our communion, we muſt have evidence, that God has not received them.

There is nothing which the Apoſtle more earneſtly inculcates on the churches, than unity and peace—nothing againſt which he more ſolemnly warns them, than diviſions and contentions—and of no ſort of ſinners does he ſpeak with greater ſeverity, and in terms of higher indignation, than of thoſe, who, under pretence of promoting religion, make ſeparations and ſchiſms among Chriſtians. He ſays, "They ſerve not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly; and with good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple." He calls them "falſe apoſtles, evil and deceitful workers, liers in wait, dogs, grievous wolves, and miniſters of Satan." On no ſubject does his zeal ſo kindle, as when he is warning the churches againſt theſe inſidious diſturbers of their peace, becauſe no men were purſuing a line of conduct ſo oppoſite to the deſign of the goſpel.

Let us particularly attend to the ſeveral arguments, by which the Apoſtle urges us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

1. *There is one body.* The church is a *body*, of which Chriſt is the *head*, and believers are the *members*. And this body is *one*. "We are all baptized into one body." Though for the convenience of worſhip, Chriſtians are formed into diſtinct ſocieties, yet they conſtitute but one body. They



are all ſubject to one head—animated by one Spirit, and nouriſhed by the ſame ſpiritual bread. They are united to their head by faith, and to their fellow members by love. "God hath tempered the parts of the body together, that there ſhould be no ſchiſm in it, but that the members ſhould have the ſame care one of another; that whether one member ſuffer, all ſhould ſuffer with it, or one be honored, all ſhould rejoice with it. Now we are the body of Chriſt, and members in particular. And from Chriſt the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, maketh increaſe to the edifying of itſelf in love." If we profeſs to be Chriſtians, we call ourſelves members of Chriſt, and fellow members with each other. Shall we then diſturb the unity of the Spirit, and break the bond of peace? Shall the members of the ſame body ſeparate from each other? Shall they riſe againſt their common head? In the natural body this would be monſtrous. In the ſpiritual body it is impious. When we thus ſin againſt the brethren, we ſin againſt Chriſt.

2. *There is one Spirit.*

As all the members of the natural body are animated by one ſoul, ſo all the members of Chriſt's body are ſanctified, ſtrengthened and led by the ſame Spirit. The body is one, for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. And we all have acceſs through Chriſt by one Spirit unto the Father. Now if by the Spirit of Chriſt we become members of his body, then no error in judgment, or miſtake in practice, which is not inconſiſtent with one's having the Spirit, can prove that he is not a real member of Chriſt, and juſtify us in excluding him from our fellowſhip. Since there is one Spirit, which dwells in all good Chriſtians, all contention, bitterneſs and envy—all animoſity, diviſion and ſeparation in the church, are offences againſt the Holy Spirit. "Grieve not the Holy

troverſy, and would alſo throw aſide ſuch errors as are merely ſpeculative, the faith of Chriſtians would appear to be more nearly the ſame, than is generally imagined. St. James ſays, "I will ſhew you my faith by my works." If your brethren queſtion the ſoundneſs of your faith, go, ſhew it in this orthodox and apoſtolic manner. If they give you the ſame proof of their faith, however weak you may think them in ſome things, receive them, but not to doubtful diſputation. If your faith and theirs, is thus far one; with reſpect to other things, forbear one another in love.

6. *There is one baptiſm*, which is the badge of our relation to Jeſus Chriſt. We are all baptized in the name of Chriſt; and he is not divided.—Chriſtians may differ in their opinions concerning the age at which perſons become the ſubjects of baptiſm, and the manner in which they ought to receive it; but ſtill, in regard of the great deſign of it, which is the anſwer of a good conſcience toward God, and in regard of the obligations implied in it, which are to put off the works of the fleſh, and to put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, it is one and the ſame. We all conſider it as an inſtitution of Chriſt, a badge of our relation to him, a token of our obligation to depart from iniquity, and a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith; and though we may differ in ſome of the ſmaller circumſtances of it, why may we not view it as ſubſtantially the ſame? Why may we not walk together as brethren, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Baptiſm was not intended to break Chriſtians into various ſects, as if ſome were baptized in the name of Paul—ſome in the name of Apollos—and ſome in the name of Cephas; but to unite the whole chriſtian world; for all are baptized in the name of Chriſt, and into one body.

7. *There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in us all.*

There is one God who is the Father of the whole creation; but in a more eminent ſenſe the Father of Chriſtians. He has not only created them by his power, and ſupported them by his providence, but he has alſo by his Spirit begotten them to newneſs of life, and by his grace adopted them to a heavenly inheritance. We have all one Father, one God has created us, one Spirit has ſanctified us, one inheritance is reſerved for us—All we are brethren—Let us love one another with a pure heart fervently. How good and how pleaſant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Our God and Father is *above all.* He reigns ſupreme. The great and leading precept which he has given his children is, that they love one another. This is the royal law—it is the end of the commandment. We are above all things to put on charity. Every oppoſition to this law is rebellion againſt the higheſt authority.

God is *through all.* His eſſence pervades our frame, his eyes ſearch and try our ſouls, his influence preſerves our ſpirits. To him is known every malevolent, unſocial and contentious paſſion that moves within us. Our uncharitable affections to one another are ingratitude and impiety to him in whom we live and move and have our being. "God is love; if we dwell in love, we dwell in God, and he in us. If we ſay we love God, and ſtill hate our brother, we deceive ourſelves; for he who loveth not his brother, whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God, whom he hath not ſeen?"

God is *in all*, i. e. in all true Chriſtians by his Spirit. They are the temple of God, and his Spirit dwelleth in them. Every malicious, envious, revengeful paſſion which the Chriſtian indulges, is an oppoſition to the Spirit of God, whoſe fruits are love, peace, longſuffering, gentleneſs and meekneſs; and every injury which he commits againſt his fellow Chriſtians, is an inſult upon that Spirit

Spirit of God," ſays the Apoſtle, "whereby ye are ſealed to the day of redemption; and let all bitterneſs, wrath, clamor and evil ſpeaking, be put away from you." The conſideration that the Spirit of God dwells in our brethren, as well as in us, ſhould make us careful to maintain the bond of peace. When we contend with them, we fight againſt the Spirit of peace. "If there be any fellowſhip of the Spirit—be ye like minded, having the ſame love, and let nothing be done through ſtrife or vain glory."

3. *Ye are called in one hope of your calling.*

We are called to obtain the ſame glorious ſalvation through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. We are all called by the ſame word; our hope is grounded on the ſame promiſes; and the object of our hope is the ſame immortal life. Hope may be more or leſs ſtrong and influencing in different Chriſtians, according to their different meaſures of knowledge and grace; but in its object and foundation, in its nature and tendency, it is the ſame. This conſideration ſhould mightily ſtrengthen the bond of peace. Are we purſuing the ſame grand deſign, and walking in the ſame high road to glory? Let us not fall out by the way; let us go hand in hand, and be fellow workers to the kingdom of God. Do we expect to dwell together in heaven? Let there be no variance among us while we are here. In heaven charity never fails: Let us then above all things, have fervent charity among ourſelves; and purify our ſouls, by obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

4. *There is one Lord*, whom we all profeſs to ſerve. Jeſus Chriſt is Lord of all by the ſame right. He has bought us with a high price—redeemed us by his own blood. We all ſtand on the ſame footing, and muſt build our hopes on the ſame foundation. We have no pretence to glory

over one another. Remembering, that we were all under the ſame guilt and condemnation, and have been redeemed by the ſame Savior, we ſhould walk together in all humility, meekneſs and love.

There is no reſpect of perſons with Chriſt, for he is the ſame Lord over all; and has paid for others the ſame price as for us. Shall we then dare to ſmite our fellow ſervants? Will our common Lord look on with indifference, while we diſturb the peace and order of his houſehold? "He who doth wrong, ſhall receive for the wrong he hath done."

We are called to the ſame ſervice, are under the ſame laws, and muſt appear at the ſame judgment. "Why then doſt thou judge thy brother? Or why doſt thou ſet at nought thy brother? For we ſhall all ſtand before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt. Every one of us muſt give an account of himſelf to God. Who art thou that judgeſt another man's ſervant? To his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth. Let us not judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a ſtumbling block, or occaſion to fall in his brother's way."

5. *There is one faith.* The ſame goſpel is given us for the rule of our faith, and this goſpel all Chriſtians profeſs to receive. Hence the apoſtles ſpeak of one common faith—like precious faith, and the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

The faith of all true Chriſtians is eſſentially the ſame. The object of it is the word of God—the nature of it is receiving the love of the truth—the effect of it is to purify the heart. However they may differ in ſome matters of ſpeculation, they agree in the great doctrines which are eſſential to godlineſs. If we would make allowance for men's miſapprehenſions of each other's ſentiments, for their different phraſes and modes of diction, for differences, which proceed from the heat of con-

troverſy, and would alſo throw aſide ſuch errors as are merely ſpeculative, the faith of Chriſtians would appear to be more nearly the ſame, than is generally imagined. St. James ſays, "I will ſhew you my faith by my works." If your brethren queſtion the ſoundneſs of your faith, go, ſhew it in this orthodox and apoſtolic manner. If they give you the ſame proof of their faith, however weak you may think them in ſome things, receive them, but not to doubtful diſputation. If your faith and theirs, is thus far one; with reſpect to other things, forbear one another in love.

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which dwells in them; for they are the templ
God, and if any man profane this temple, him
God deſtroy. Chriſtians are builded together
an habitation of God through the Spirit; all
viſions and ſeparations among the members of
church of God are inconſiſtent with their enjoy
the Spirit. He dwells with thoſe who are m
and humble, and tremble at the word—not w
the proud, ſelfconfident and vain.

They who cauſe diviſions in churches in or
to form new ſects, uſually make high pretenſi
to the influence of the Spirit. But whatever t
may pretend, their conduct demonſtrates, that t
have not the Spirit of God; for he is not a Sp
of contention, but of peace; and his work is
diviſion and ſeparation among Chriſtians, but u
ty and love. See then that you walk worthy
your vocation, in all humility, meekneſs, forbe
ance and love, keeping the unity of the Spiri
the bond of peace; for there is one body, o
Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one bapti
one God and Father of all, who is above
through all, and in us all.



SERMON XXIII.

EPHESIANS iv. 8——13.

Wherefore he ſaith, When he aſcended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he aſcended, what is it, but that he deſcended firſt into the lower parts of the earth? He that deſcended is the ſame that alſo aſcended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave ſome apoſtles; and ſome prophets; and ſome evangeliſts; and ſome paſtors and teachers; for the perfecting of the ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.

THE Apoſtle, having mentioned, in the 7th verſe, the grace beſtowed on believers "according to the meaſure of the *gift* of Chriſt," immediately proceeds, in the words now read, to explain what the *gifts* are which Chriſt has beſtowed; and to ſhew, that they were diſpenſed at his aſcenſion, according to the divine purpoſe, for the general edification of the church.

To prove, that the aſcenſion of Chriſt was to be followed with the beſtowment of ſpiritual gifts, he quotes a paſſage from the 68th Pſalm. "Thou

haſt aſcended on high; thou haſt led captivity captive; thou haſt received gifts for men." This this was ſpoken, not of the divine nature, but of Chriſt, as God manifeſt in the fleſh, he concludes from the expreſſion, "Thou haſt aſcended on high." For his *aſcenſion* preſuppoſes a *deſcent* into the lower parts of the earth. And he who thus deſcended is the ſame that aſcended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. Theſe terms cannot properly be applied to God, who is a univerſal Spirit; nor yet can they, in their full ſenſe, belong to David, or any mere man; and therefore muſt be underſtood of Jeſus Chriſt.

Our Lord's "deſcent into the lower parts of the earth," may ſignify his *incarnation;* according to theſe words of David, "My ſubſtance was not hid from thee, when I was curiouſly wrought *in the lower parts of the earth.*" Or it may refer to his *death* and *burial,* in which ſenſe the phraſe is alſo uſed. "They that ſeek to deſtroy me, ſhall go down into *the lower parts* of the earth;" or into the grave.

Chriſt's exaltation is expreſſed by his "aſcending up *far above all heavens*"—above theſe viſible ſtarry heavens——into the glorious preſence of God, who has ſet his glory above the heavens.

Elſewhere he is ſaid to be "made higher than the heavens;" and to be "raiſed to heavenly places far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion."

Chriſt has thus aſcended, "that he might fill all things;" i. e. might, according to his promiſe, fill his apoſtles and other diſciples with heavenly gifts and graces, and thus furniſh them to every work to which they ſhould be called.

"He led captivity captive."——This phraſe is uſed, in the Old Teſtament, to ſignify a complete conqueſt over enemies, eſpecially over ſuch as had formerly been victorious. This is the meaning of

ae ſong of Deborah. In our text it refers to
's triumph over *Satan* and *death*. "He, by
ıth, delivered thoſe, who through fear of
were ſubject to bondage."——"He ſpoiled
palities and powers, triumphing over them
,croſs." But he triumphed more glorioufly,
after his aſcenſion, he poured down his holy
on his apoſtles and diſciples, and thus ena-
ıem to caſt out devils, and to turn ſinners
he power of Satan unto God. He alſo tri-
ıd over death in a moſt conſpicuous manner,
riſing from the grave, aſcending into heav-
d ſhedding forth miraculous gifts, he demon-
his power to quicken whom he would, to
ırth the dead from their graves, and to ex-
ievers to an eternal ſtate of glory with him.

e gave gifts to men." The expreſſion in the
Palm is, "He *received* gifts *for* men." He
ed gifts from the Father to beſtow them on
"It hath pleaſed the Father, that in him all
ı ſhould dwell; and that of his fulneſs we
ıld receive grace for grace." All power, in
ı and earth, is committed to him. Hence,
he commanded his apoſtles to go forth and
ı the goſpel, he promiſed to endue them with
from on high, by which they ſhould caſt
evils, ſpeak with new tongues, recover the
ınd defeat all the power of the enemy, and
lemonſtrate their divine commiſſion.
ides theſe extraordinary gifts vouchſafed for
onfirmation of the goſpel, he promiſed and
red ſuch an internal influence of the Spirit,
ompany the preaching of the goſpel, as ſhould
men's hearts to attend to it and believe it.—
dingly, wherever the apoſtles went preaching
ord, multitudes were turned from darkneſs to
from the power of Satan to God, and from

the works of the flesh to works meet for repentance.

The extraordinary gifts continued only for a season, until the gospel was established. The ordinary influence of the Spirit is alike necessary in all ages, and will, in a greater or less degree, attend the gospel to the end of the world.

Among the gifts bestowed on the church, St. Paul particularly mentions the *officers* appointed for its edification. "Christ gave some apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; some pastors and teachers."

By apostles, prophets and evangelists are intended those extraordinary ministers, who were employed to propagate the gospel in the world, and who, for that purpose, were endowed with miraculous powers. By pastors and teachers are generally understood those ordinary ministers, who had the care of particular churches, and who were to be continued in succession to the end of the world. A similar distinction is made in the 12th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. "God hath set some in the church; first apostles; secondarily prophets; thirdly teachers; after that miracles &c."

The name of *apostles* is especially applied to those, who were immediately commissioned by Jesus Christ, to be witnesses of his doctrines and works, his death and resurrection, and to go forth and publish his gospel among the nations of the earth. To these, as occasion required, the Spirit revealed the mysteries of the divine will, that they might communicate them to the world.

Prophets were men endowed with supernatural knowledge in divine things; the knowledge of the ancient scriptures—of the doctrines and mysteries of the gospel—and, in some cases, of future events—These were chiefly employed in opening and explaining to believers the great truths of religion.

Evangeliſts are generally ſuppoſed to have been men employed in propagating the goſpel among the Heathens, in founding churches where Chriſt had not been named, and in confirming the churches which were already founded. They are diſtinguiſhed from the apoſtles only as their gifts and employments were more limited and confined.

Paſtors and *teachers* were thoſe who labored in word and doctrine, eſpecially in particular churches, of which they had the immediate charge. As the apoſtles received the word more immediately from Chriſt, either by his perſonal inſtruction, or ſpiritual inſpiration, ſo they from time to time communicated it to the paſtors and teachers, who, receiving it from them, preached it to others, for their converſion to, and edification in the faith of the goſpel. This appears from Paul's charge to the elders of Epheſus, from his inſtructions to Timothy and Titus, and from John's letters to the angels of the churches in Aſia.

Chriſt gave theſe various officers "for the perfecting of the ſaints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt." Or, as the words, more agreeably to the original, may be rendered, He gave paſtors and teachers, *in order to the preparing of holy men for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt.** The officers, whom Chriſt gave, were to inſtruct and furniſh others for the miniſtry; and thus a ſucceſſion of miniſters was to be continued in the church, for her edification in knowledge, faith and holineſs.

In the paſſage now explained ſeveral things are ſuggeſted which deſerve our particular attention.

I. It is evident, that public teachers in the church are to be a diſtinct order of men.

* πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ.

Chriſt has given *ſome* paſtors and teachers. He has ſet *ſome* in the church; firſt apoſtles, next prophets, then teachers. Are *all* apoſtles? Or *all* prophets? Or *all* teachers?———By no means.—If all the body were one member, Where were the body? If all the members of the church were to aſſume one office, Where were the church?

None have a right publicly to teach in the church, but thoſe who are *called*—*ſent*—authoriſed to the work in the goſpel way. "How ſhall they preach, except they be ſent?"—"No man taketh this honor to himſelf, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;" and as were his ſons. They were conſecrated by Moſes, God's miniſter, according to his appointment, that they might miniſter to him in the prieſt's office. Corah and his companions fell under an awful condemnation, becauſe they preſumed to offer incenſe with unhallowed hands, pretending that all the congregation were holy, and that one had as good a right as another, and *they* as good a right as the ſons of Aaron, to perform the ſolemn functions of the prieſthood. To theſe impious uſurpers Jude compares thoſe who had crept into the church unawares, turning the grace of God into wantonneſs. He ſays, "They have gone in the way of Cain, run greedily after the error of Balaam, and periſhed in the gainſaying of Corah." All Chriſtians are to exhort, reprove and comfort one another, as there is occaſion; but public teaching in the church belongs peculiarly to ſome—to thoſe who are given to be paſtors and teachers.

II. Public teachers are here called Chriſt's gifts. "He *gave* ſome paſtors and teachers." And they are to be received by the church in the way, in which he ſends them.

There is a particular order, which Chriſt has inſtituted, for the introduction of public teachers.—The firſt apoſtles were commiſſioned immediately

by him. In the time of his miniſtry on earth, he ordained twelve to preach the kingdom of God among the Jews. After his reſurrection, he enlarged their commiſſion, ſaying, "Go, preach the goſpel to all nations." But for this work they muſt underſtand the language of all nations; therefore he ſays, "Tarry ye at Jeruſalem," confine your miniſtry there, "until ye be endued with power from on high." On the day of Pentecoſt, which was about ten days after Chriſt's aſcenſion, when the twelve apoſtles, and thoſe who had companied with them, while Chriſt went in and out among them, making in all about an hundred and twenty, were all gathered together in one place, the holy Ghoſt was ſhed on them in miraculous gifts, and there appeared, on each of them, cloven tongues, like as of fire, and they began to ſpeak with other tongues. And all the people, who were aſſembled from different countries to attend the feſtival, heard them ſpeak, in their own various languages, the wonderful works of God. To this remarkable event the apoſtle refers, when he ſays in the text, "Chriſt aſcended on high, and gave gifts to men, and he gave ſome apoſtles, ſome prophets, &c."

They who were thus commiſſioned of heaven to preach the goſpel, were authoriſed to ordain *others*. Paul, after his converſion, preſumed not to preach, until Ananias, by immediate direction from Chriſt, had informed him, that he was choſen to this work, and had confirmed the information by a miracle. Afterward Paul came to Jeruſalem, and was there received by the apoſtles. And when he was about to go, in company with Barnabas, on a miſſion to the Heathens, they were both ſeparated to this miſſion, by the prophets and elders of the church, who faſted and prayed, and laid their hands on them and ſent them away.

Timothy was ordained a biſhop or elder by the laying on of the hands of the preſbytery.——

And the things, which he had received, the ſame he was to commit to faithful men, who ſhould be able to teach others alſo.

When Paul and Barnabas went forth preaching the goſpel and planting churches among the Gentiles, *they* ordained elders in every church.

Titus, who was a miniſter in the Iſle of Crete, was left there by Paul, for this, among other purpoſes, "that he might ordain elders in every city"—If the elderſhip might be aſſumed at pleaſure, or conferred by private hands, why ſhould *Titus* be left in Crete to ordain elders?

Chriſt gave paſtors and teachers, not only to preach his goſpel, but to train up and prepare holy men for the ſame work. They who undertake this ſacred work ſhould be *ſaints;* but it is not *every* ſaint who is qualified for it. There muſt be a previous education. They who deſire the miniſterial office ſhould be fitted for it under the inſtructions, and ſent forth under the recommendations of teachers already in office. This our apoſtle plainly ſignifies, when he ſays, Chriſt gave apoſtles, prophets and teachers, at his aſcenſion, "in order to the perfecting of ſaints for the work of the miniſtry."

We find, in ſcripture, no inſtance of ordination to the miniſterial office, by any other than elders of churches. Every church has a right to *chooſe* her own miniſter; but his induction into office muſt be by the hands of the preſbytery. When ſome were to be appointed to preſide over the church ſtock, and the daily miniſtrations to the poor, the apoſtles referred the *choice* of the perſons to the multitude of the diſciples; but the *ordination* they reſerved to themſelves. They ſaid, "Look ye out ſeven men of honeſt report—whom *we* may appoint over this buſineſs."

As the approbation of elders was neceſſary to authoriſe men to preach the goſpel, ſo we find, that

the apoſtles, for the prevention of fraud and impoſition, ſent forth their preachers with written teſtimonials. This appears, from the hiſtory of the Acts and from Paul's epiſtles, to have been an uniform practice. And the churches were never to receive a ſtranger, in the capacity of a miniſter, unleſs he could exhibit ſome evidence, that he was not only a chriſtian, but a miniſter, approved of his brethren. It was a ſign of great degeneracy in the church of Thyatira, that ſhe ſuffered thoſe to teach who ſaid they were prophets, but brought no credentials of their prophetic character. The church of Epheſus, on the contrary, was commended, becauſe ſhe could not bear them who were evil; —but tried them, who ſaid they were apoſtles, and were not, and found them liars.

III. Miniſters are to be men endued with gifts ſuitable to the work to which they are called.

As in the early days of the goſpel, public teachers were called to extraordinary ſervices, ſo they were endued with extraordinary gifts: But theſe gifts were only for a ſeaſon. The apoſtle ſays, "Whether there be propheſies, they ſhall fail;—whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be knowledge," immediately inſpired knowledge, "it ſhall vaniſh away."

Since the goſpel is fully eſtabliſhed, the miracles which attended its firſt publication are no longer of uſe; and ſince it communicates to us all things, which pertain to life and godlineſs, there is no farther need of inſpiration. The apoſtle tells Timothy, that the ſcriptures are able to make the man of God perfect, wiſe to ſalvation, and furniſhed unto every good work.

But as the buſineſs of a miniſter is to teach men the things, which Chriſt has commanded in the holy ſcriptures, ſo it is neceſſary that he himſelf ſhould be fully inſtructed in them. One who undertakes to teach others, ſhould well underſtand,

firmly believe, ardently love, and practically exemplify the religion which he teaches. He ſhould not be a novice; but one who holds faſt the faithful word, as he has been taught; and one who by ſound doctrine is able to exhort and to convince gainſayers. He ſhould be apt to teach, having not only a good knowledge, but an eaſy faculty of communicating to others the knowledge which he has in the doctrines and duties of the goſpel. That he may be able rightly to divide the word of truth, he muſt apply himſelf to ſtudy, and give attendance to reading.

In the early days of the goſpel, as there were evangeliſts, who went forth to preach the goſpel, where Chriſt had not been named; ſo there were paſtors and teachers, who had the immediate care of churches already eſtabliſhed. *Theſe* the apoſtle charges to take heed to the flocks, over which they were made overſeers. Miniſters are not to enter into each other's labors, but to move within their reſpective meaſures and lines.

IV. The great object of the goſpel miniſtry is the building up of the church of Chriſt. When he aſcended, he gave paſtors and teachers—"for the edifying of his body."

The church is edified, when ſhe increaſes by the addition of new members; and when ſhe becomes more holy by the religious improvements of her preſent members. In both theſe ways, the miniſtry is intended for the edification of the church.

Miniſters ſhould ſo ſpeak the word, as to convince gainſayers, awaken the careleſs, reclaim the erroneous, inſtruct the ignorant, and turn them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. "The ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive; but be gentle, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſs, inſtructing them who oppoſe themſelves; if peradventure God will give them repentance, to

the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themſelves out of the ſnare of the devil."

You will obſerve; the apoſtle expreſſes the ſucceſs of the goſpel by the phraſe of *edifying Chriſt's body*, becauſe wherever his religion prevails in men's hearts, there will be a diſpoſition to come within his church and attend on his ordinances. Real converts will not be indifferent to the edification of Chriſt's houſe; much leſs will they feel a deſire to pull it down.——They will not rend and divide Chriſt's body; but ſeek to preſerve its ſoundneſs and promote its growth. They who, in the apoſtle's days, were converted to the faith of the goſpel, immediately joined themſelves to the Lord. The increaſe and union of the church are the immediate effects of a real revival of religion.

The miniſtry is deſigned for the improvement of ſaints, as well as for the converſion of ſinners.—— They who view themſelves as regenerate, are not to ſuppoſe, that they have already attained—but they are to go on to perfection. For this end they are to attend on the appointed miniſtration of the word; and to this end the miniſtration of it ſhould be adapted. The apoſtles warned every man, and taught every man in all wiſdom, that they might preſent every man perfect in Chriſt Jeſus.

Paſtors and teachers are given for the edifying of Chriſt's body, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt."

"There is one faith;" and we ſhould all come to ſuch a good underſtanding in the doctrines of Chriſt, as to have this *one*—this *like precious* faith; or, if we differ in ſentiment, ſtill to maintain that unity of affection which is the fruit of faith. We ſhould all mind one and the ſame grand object, the common ſalvation.

Chriſtians may have various opinions about the leſs important doctrines of religion; but true faith has the ſame influence in all. It works by love, and purifies the heart. So far, therefore, as we walk together in mutual peace and love, and in obedience to our common Lord, we may be ſaid to have come to the unity of the faith.

The apoſtle mentions alſo the unity of the *knowledge* of Chriſt. All Chriſtians profeſs to believe in him as their teacher and Savior. But unleſs this profeſſion is accompanied with a love of his precepts and a conformity to his example, it avails us nothing. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay?" To come to the knowledge of Chriſt, is to have the ſame mind as was in him, and to walk as he walked. So far as we agree in that holy temper and life, which his example exhibits, and his goſpel requires, we come to the unity of the knowledge of him.

As our conformity to Chriſt will not be perfect in this world, we never muſt reſt in attainments already made, but continually aſpire to the character of a perfect man—to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. We muſt labor to become Chriſtians of full maturity and ripeneſs in all thoſe heavenly graces which are derived from him. The apoſtle ſays of himſelf, "I preſs toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." He adds, "Let us, as many as are perfect, be thus minded."

REFLECTIONS.

1. Our ſubject ſhould lead us to adore the wiſdom of God in the proviſion made for our edification in knowledge and holineſs.

He has given apoſtles and prophets, paſtors and teachers, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt.—He has adapted his gifts to different conditions of

the church. In its firſt ages there were apoſtles—in its ordinary ſtate there are paſtors. Since the public miniſtration of the word is an inſtitution of Chriſt, deſigned for the happineſs of fallen men, How inexcuſable are they who deſpiſe it? If this is a mean of converting ſinners; they who are conſcious of their impenitent and guilty ſtate, ſhould ſeek the grace and mercy of God for their renovation and forgiveneſs, by a faithful attendance on this inſtitution. If they put the word of God from them, they judge themſelves unworthy of eternal life. If the miniſtry is deſigned for the improvement of ſaints in knowledge and faith, let none, in the pride of their own ſufficiency, turn away from it. Are you already perfect?———If not then you need the means of edification—uſe them with diligence while you are in this world: In the future you will not need them;—there you will come to perfect men.

2. If Chriſt has given paſtors and teachers for our edification, till we come in the unity of faith and knowledge to more perfect men—then ſuch a conduct in miniſters, or in private Chriſtians, as tends to diſunite the body of Chriſt, muſt be highly offenſive to him. Miniſters ſhould remember, that they are ordained to bring men to a unity in the faith and knowledge of Chriſt, and in love and affection to one another. They ſhould unite their influence to accompliſh this end. If they cauſe diviſions and offences, they walk contrary to the doctrine which they have received, They ſerve not the Lord Jeſus. Chriſtians ſhould walk together in love, and ſtudy the things which make for peace, both in the church of which they are members, and among other churches of our common Lord.

3. What cauſe have we to be humble, that, under our means of growth, we fall ſo much below the ſtature of perfect men? Let us compare our-

ſelves with the precepts and pattern of Jeſus Chriſt. How much we come ſhort of that purity which his goſpel requires, and which his life in the fleſh exemplified? It would be uſeful, that we ſhould take a frequent review of our lives—that we ſhould daily examine the temper of our hearts. Thus we may learn what manner of ſpirit we are of—what progreſs we make, or whether any at all—in what reſpects our tempers need correction, and our lives amendment—and thus we ſhall be excited to come to the throne of grace, that we may obtain grace to help in the time of need.

4. Let us make continual improvement in religion. This is the beſt evidence of our ſincerity.—Chriſt, who has given paſtors and teachers for the miniſtry, has a fulneſs of the Spirit at his diſpoſal. Of his fulneſs we may receive grace ſuited to our caſes, and equal to our wants. While we attend on his inſtitutions, let us implore his bleſſing to accompany them; and thus endeavor to riſe above the world, to purge away our remaining corruptions, to ſtrengthen every holy principle, and to abound more and more in every grace and good work, till we come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.

SERMON XXIV.

EPHESIANS iv. 14, 15, 16.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftings, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase to the edifying of itself in love.

IN the preceding verses, the Apostle observes, that Christ instituted the gospel ministry, for the edification of his body, the church, until we all come, in the unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ, unto a perfect man. Wherein this complete manhood consists, and by what means we must endeavor to attain it, he instructs us in the words which have been read.

Christian maturity is a steady belief of, and obedience to the gospel, in opposition to fickleness and inconstancy. The way in which we are to obtain and preserve this maturity in union with Jesus Christ, from whom the whole body of believers, compacted and cemented together by every joint of supply, ac-

cording to its power in the proportion of every part, maketh increaſe of the body to the edifying of itſelf in love.

The Apoſtle here deſcribes the perfect man, or mature Chriſtian, both negatively and poſitively. He is not a child toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine: But he is one, who, having embraced and profeſſed the truth with a real love of it, grows up into Chriſt in all things.

We will, firſt, conſider the negative part of this deſcription.

Chriſt inſtituted the goſpel miniſtry, that believers, arriving to maturity in faith and knowledge, ſhould no more be children, toſſed to and fro, and driven about with every wind, by the ſleight of men, and the cunning craftings, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Several metaphors are here uſed to expreſs that weakneſs and verſatility, which ſome diſcover, and which honeſt Chriſtians, under the miniſtry of the word, will endeavor to outgrow.

1. Chriſtians muſt not remain *children*.

In humility, meekneſs and teachableneſs let them be children; but in underſtanding, conſtancy and fortitude they ſhould be men. While, as new born babes, they deſire the ſincere milk of the word, let them ſo uſe it as to grow thereby.

"Call no man your father on earth," ſays our Lord, "for one is your Father in heaven." Children have but little knowledge, and but a weak judgment. They are guided more by the opinions of others, than by perſonal conviction. They may be led right or wrong, according as the examples which they ſee, and the counſels which they hear, are good, or evil. They believe haſtily, and act implicitly. They are governed by paſſion more than reaſon—by feeling more than judgment.—Now, in diſtinction from this childiſh temper, be

e fully perſuaded in your own minds. Judge for ourſelves what is right. Prove all things, and hold that which is good. Make the word of truth, not the opinions of men, the rule of your faith and conduct. Follow no man blindly, but look well to your goings. Judge of truth and error—of right and wrong, not by your occaſional feelings, or the current of your affections; but by the calm and ſober exerciſe of your underſtanding.

2. The Apoſtle cautions us, that we be *not toſſed to and fro*, like a ſhip rolling on the waves. "He that wavereth," ſays Saint James, "is like a wave of the ſea, driven with the wind and toſſed. Let not that man think that he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord. The doubleminded man is unſtable in all his ways." In oppoſition to this unſtable, fluctuating temper, we are required to "hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith, without wavering."

The man who, without principle, knowledge and judgment, aſſumes the high profeſſion of the Chriſtian, may appear ſteady in a calm ſeaſon: but, in times of temptation, he will be like a ſhip without pilot, anchor or ballaſt, toſſed about by the power of a tempeſt. He is at the mercy of every rude guſt. He is driven in any direction, as the wind happens to blow. He is elevated high, or ſunk low, as the waves riſe or fall. He makes no port; but floating at large, on the troubled element, he is, every moment, in danger of ſhipwreck.

The Chriſtian, who embarks for the heavenly world, muſt conſider, that the ocean on which he ſails, is ſubject to changing winds, and perilous ſtorms. He muſt not promiſe himſelf ſmooth waters, ſoft gales and clear ſkies; but go provided for all kinds of weather. The word of truth muſt be his compaſs, and faith his pilot; hope muſt be his anchor, and knowledge and good works his ballaſt; prudence muſt keep the watch, and ſober reaſon

hold, the helm. Thus he may ſail with ſafety in all ſeaſons.

3. We muſt *not be carried about with every wind of doctrine.*

Falſe doctrines, like winds, are bluſtering and unſteady. They blow from no certain point; but in all directions; and they frequently, and ſometimes ſuddenly, ſhift their courſe. They make great noiſe and buſtle, diſturb the atmoſphere, and, by their violent motions, they ſpread confuſion and ruin. Light bodies are eaſily taken up and driven about by every wind that blows. The gale which cleanſes the wheat, diſperſes the chaff. The deep rooted oak ſtands firm in its place, while the dry leaves beneath it are caught up, wafted around, and made the ſport of every guſt. So the ſincere Chriſtian, rooted and grounded in the truth, and grown up to maturity in faith and knowledge, is ſtedfaſt in his religion, whatever ſtorms may aſſault him. He remains in his place, whatever winds may blow. But the light and chaffy Chriſtian; the hypocritical, unprincipled profeſſor, is eaſily carried about by divers and ſtrange doctrines. He ſhifts his courſe and changes his direction, as the wind of popular opinion happens to drive.

If we would be conſtant in our religion, we muſt be rooted in faith and love.

4. The Apoſtle warns us, that we are in danger from *the ſleight of men, and the cunning craftings whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*

The true miniſters of Chriſt uſe great plainneſs of ſpeech, and by manifeſtation of the truth commend themſelves to the conſciences of men. Corrupt teachers uſe ſleight and craft, that they may enſnare the ſimple, and decoy the unſuſpecting, and thus make proſelytes to their party.

Chriſtians ſhould beware of evil workers, and watch againſt their diſhoneſt arts. That they may eſcape the dangers to which they are expoſed in

corrupt times, they muſt attend to the plain and obvious precepts and doctrines of the goſpel, make theſe their rule, and conſent to no opinion, or practice inconſiſtent with them, however plauſibly it may be recommended. They muſt furniſh themſelves with ſuch knowledge in divine things, as to diſcern the deſigns, and eſcape the artifice of evil men and ſeducers.

That Chriſtians may the better ſecure themſelves from ſeduction, the goſpel has warned them of the various crafts of thoſe who lie in wait for them.

Deceivers come in ſheep's clothing; with an oſtentation of uncommon humility, meekneſs and heavenlineſs; but inwardly, they are ravening wolves, whoſe real aim is to ſcatter and devour the ſheep.

They are deceitful workers, transforming themſelves into apoſtles of Chriſt, and miniſters of righteouſneſs; and thus corrupting men from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt; even as Satan transformed himſelf into an angel of light, and through his ſubtilty beguiled Eve from her fidelity to God. Like him, they make cautious advances, not alarming men, at firſt, by the groſſeſt errors; but leading them along, ſtep by ſtep, from ſmaller errors to greater. Thus they wax worſe and worſe, deceiving, and being deceived.

They practiſe not their arts directly on thoſe, who, by reaſon of uſe, have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil; but they beguile unſtable ſouls, deceive the hearts of the ſimple, creep into houſes and lead captive the more tender ſex, and, by their means, ſubvert whole houſes, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's ſake.

Such teachers diſcover a peculiar malignity againſt the true miniſters of Chriſt. Paul ſpeaking to the Galatians concerning the deceivers who were among them, ſays, "They zealouſly affect you,

but not well;—they would exclude us, that you might affect them." Theſe crafty and deſigning preachers appeared among the Corinthians. There they repreſented Paul as making the goſpel burdenſome, while they preached it freely, and without a reward. And yet the reverſe was true. They, by their inſidious arts, devoured thoſe among whom they went, and even brought them into bondage; while Paul made the goſpel without charge; and though he aſſerted his right to live of the goſpel, yet he waved the right, or uſed it with ſuch moderation, as to give no cauſe of complaint.

Deceivers are confined to no ſphere, and governed by no rule; but ſtretch themſelves beyond their line, enter into other men's labors, and build another man's foundation. Thus they cauſe diviſions and offences, contrary to the doctrine of peace and unity which the churches have received.

They pretend to ſuperior ſanctity, and ſay to others, "Stand by yourſelves, come not near to us; for we are holier than you;" when, in reality, "they who thus ſeparate themſelves, are ſenſual, and have not the Spirit."

They are watchful to take advantage of any unhappy circumſtance in a church, ſuch as the diſcipline of an offender, the death of a miniſter, or accidental contention, and, by ſuch means, to introduce and eſtabliſh themſelves. Paul ſays to the Epheſians, among whom he had preached for ſeveral years, "I know that, *after my departure*, ſhall grievous wolves enter in among you, not ſparing the flock; yea, even if your own ſelves ſhall men ariſe ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw away diſciples after them."

Such teachers labor to unſettle men's minds from the eſtabliſhed order of the goſpel, and to prejudice them againſt the regular maintenance of the miniſtry, repreſenting all order in churches as tyranny, and all ſtated proviſion for the miniſtry,

is oppreſſion. They promiſe men liberty; but are themſelves the ſervants of corruption. They ſpeak evil of things which they underſtand not, and allure through the luſts of the fleſh, thoſe who were clean eſcaped from them who live in error.

The goſpel has thus particularly informed us of the cunning craftings of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive, that we may not be led away by the error of the wicked, nor fall from our own ſtedfaſtneſs.

We have conſidered the negative part of the deſcription given of the mature Chriſtian.

We will now, ſecondly, attend to the poſitive part. The Chriſtian, "ſpeaking the truth in love, ſhould grow up in all things into Chriſt."

1. We muſt "ſpeak the truth in love;" or "be ſincere in love;" as the margin reads. The word is of an extenſive ſignification. It imports, to receive, retain and obey the truth, as well as to ſpeak or profeſs it. Particularly;

We ſhould acquire a good *doctrinal knowledge* of the truth as it is in Jeſus. We ſhould examine the evidences of our religion, that we may be able to give an anſwer to every man who aſks the reaſon of our faith; and we ſhould acquaint ourſelves with the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel, that we may diſcern things which differ, and approve thoſe that are excellent.

We ſhould be well *eſtabliſhed* in the truth. The Apoſtle tells the Corinthians, "His preaching was not with enticing words of men's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the Spirit and of power, that their faith might not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God." He expreſſes his deſire for the Coloſſians, "that they might attain to the full aſſurance of underſtanding in the acknowledgment of the goſpel, leſt any man ſhould beguile them with enticing words." He rejoiced to "be-

hold their order, and the ſtedfaſtneſs of their faith in Chriſt." And he exhorts them to "walk in Chriſt, rooted and built up in him, and eſtabliſhed in the faith, as they have been taught."

We ſhould ſee that our hearts are *conformed* to the truth. One may have a good knowledge of the evidences and doctrines of the goſpel, and yet be a ſtranger to the power of it. Such a man is liable to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, and to make ſhipwreck of his faith, in tempeſtuous ſeaſons. Our beſt ſecurity againſt this danger, is a heart eſtabliſhed with grace. "Take heed," ſays Saint Peter, "leſt, being led away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt." One who has felt the tranſforming power of the goſpel, has a witneſs in himſelf, that it is true—he knows it muſt be from God, becauſe it inculcates that purity, righteouſneſs, benevolence, humility, meekneſs, temperance and univerſal rectitude, which muſt always be approvable in the ſight of a holy and perfect Being; and in proportion as he finds more of theſe tempers in himſelf, he has clearer evidence, that the goſpel has come to him with divine power. He will not be perſuaded to renounce a diſpenſation, which God has ſo manifeſtly owned. He will not ſuſpect thoſe doctrines to be falſe, which have ſo powerful a tendency to make him like to God. He will not receive as truth, any thing which he perceives to be of an oppoſite tendency. He loves the commandment, becauſe it is holy—he loves the truth, becauſe it gives power to the commandment.

We muſt *walk* in the truth. The reaſon why ſome ſo eaſily turn from the truth, and run greedily in the ways of error, is becauſe they are not *governed* by the truth which they profeſs to believe. Though in words they acknowledge it, they deny it in practice; and finding themſelves

condemned by it, they conceive an enmity againſt it. When they have begun to depart from the order, and the doctrine which is after godlineſs, they find new temptations to depart farther ſtill. One error introduces another, and they wax worſe and worſe, deceiving, and being deceived.

2. As we muſt adhere to the truth, ſo we muſt "grow up in all things into Chriſt, who is the head."

Chriſt is the *head* of believers. They muſt be conformed to him; have the ſame mind, which was in him; and walk as he walked.

They muſt *grow up* into him. They are here in a ſtate of imperfection. They, at preſent, fall much below the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. They muſt endeavor to be continually growing, and aſpire after a more complete and perfect manhood.

They muſt grow *in all things*. A partial religion is not that which the goſpel teaches. We muſt have reſpect to the whole character of Chriſt—to the whole compaſs of duty—to every known doctrine and precept of ſcripture. We muſt aim to ſtand perfect and complete in all the will of God—to walk worthy of him unto all pleaſing, and to be fruitful in every good work. "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſſed away; all things are become new." A hypocrite may ſeem to grow in ſome things, while he is deſtitute of the main things, which belong to religion. He may abound in knowledge; but he fails in practice. He may have much zeal; but he has no humility. He may be warm in his devotions; but he is cold in his charity. He may pretend to a ſtrong faith; but he is void of real holineſs. He may talk much about religion; but he does little. He may expreſs much joy in Chriſt, and comfort of hope; but he is full of love to the world, and a ſtranger to contentment and patience.

things wherewith ye may edify *one another*."—"Let the body be *joined together* and *compacted*, that it may make increaſe."—"Let your *love* abound more and more."—"Abound in *love* one toward another, and toward all men."

This is the Apoſtle's favorite theme.

1. We ſee then, that there can be no Chriſtian growth, where Chriſtian love is wanting.

Love is a principal grace—the end of the commandment—the bond of perfectneſs—the diſtinguiſhing mark of Chriſt's diſciples—and a mean of improvement in all other graces. It is this which unites the ſeveral parts of the ſpiritual body, and maintains the communication between them, ſo that nouriſhment is miniſtered to them all.

2. We are here reminded, that Chriſtians are bound to ſeek the peace, in order to the edification of the particular church, of which they are members. *Theſe* the Apoſtle joins together. The latter cannot take place without the former. We muſt guard againſt every thing which tends to ſchiſm and diſunion in the body; and prevent, as far as poſſible, thoſe evils which would break the coheſion, or weaken the attraction, whereby its parts are held together. "Where envy and ſtrife are, there is confuſion and every evil work."

3. We learn from our ſubject, that no pretences of perſonal edification will juſtify our withdrawing from the communion of a church, in ſuch a manner as would hinder the edification of our brethren. We are to be joined and compacted together, and thus to make increaſe. We are to look at the things of others, as well as at our own. We are, indeed, to edify ourſelves; but our edification muſt be in *love*, as well as in other graces. And this love will excite us to ſtudy the things which make for the common edification. You think, perhaps, the word is diſpenſed more to your edification, or more to your taſte, in ſome other place.

than in the church with which you are immediately connected. It may be ſo: This is no improbable ſuppoſition. Preachers have different gifts, and hearers have different humors. One may reliſh this, and another that manner of preaching, though the ſame goſpel is diſpenſed. Still you are not to withdraw from the aſſembly of your brethren, if your withdrawment would diſturb the peace, and obſtruct the edification of the church. You are to ſeek, not merely your own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved. Your ſpiritual growth depends on your union with Chriſt, the head; and your communion with Chriſtians, the members of the great body. Chriſt can make his goſpel ſucceſsful, though it be delivered by one, whoſe ſpeech is called contemptible. You are then moſt likely to receive a bleſſing from your Lord, when you act in that ſpirit of love and condeſcenſion which he requires.

Paul, Apollos and Cephas, all preached the ſame goſpel; but each had his own peculiar manner of preaching. Paul was a ſtrong reaſoner; Apollos was an eloquent orator; Peter was a warm and affectionate ſpeaker. They all had their admirers in Corinth. One ſaid, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; and another, I am of Peter. Paul reproved this party attachment, as an indication, that they were carnal; that they were, as children, governed more by natural humor, than by ſpiritual underſtanding. "While one ſaith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who is Paul, or Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? Paul planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increaſe."

As Chriſtians have been called of God to the fellowſhip of his Son, they ſhould all ſpeak the ſame thing; they ſhould be joined together in the

ſame mind, and in the ſame [illegible] that
ſhould be no diviſions among them.

Since Chriſt has appointed the gospel min
for the edification of his body, [illegible]
bly and prayerfully attend upon it as its ins
tion, keeping in view its importance and ad
ing to grow thereby, and desiring to come
unity of faith and knowledge, unto the [illegible]
perfect men.

Finally, beloved brethren, build yourselves
on your moſt holy faith, pray in the Holy Gh
keep yourſelves in the love of God, and wa
the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eter
life.



SERMON XXV.

EPHESIANS iv. 17, 18, 19.

This I ſay therefore and teſtify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their heart, who, being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs.

THESE Epheſians, you will remember, had lately been called out of a ſtate of Heatheniſm to the knowledge and profeſſion of the religion of Jeſus. In the verſes immediately preceding the text, the apoſtle obſerves to them, that God had brought them within his church, and had admitted them to the privilege of the goſpel miniſtry, which was given by Jeſus Chriſt, at the time of his aſcenſion, for the edifying of his church, till all ſhould come to full maturity in religion, that they might no more be children, toſſed about by the artifice of deceivers; but might be men grown up in all things to the reſemblance of Chriſt; and, being united to him by faith, and joined one to another by love, might derive ſpiritual influence from him, and charitable aſſiſtance from their breth-

ren, and ſo make continual increaſe in every virtue and good work.

Now ſince they had experienced ſo great a change in their condition, and were placed under ſuch ſuperior advantages, the apoſtle earneſtly exhorts them, that, in all their converſation, they would diſtinguiſh themſelves from other Gentiles, and would walk worthy of their high character and calling.

The manner in which other Gentiles ſtill walked, and in which they themſelves had once walked, he deſcribes in the words which have been read.—They lived in the vanity of their mind—were darkened in their underſtanding—alienated from the life of God through their ignorance and hardneſs of heart—and, being paſt feeling, had given themſelves over to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs.

While we contemplate the manner in which theſe Gentiles walked, we ſhall ſee how converts *ought* to walk; for the apoſtle here holds up to view the converſation of the former, for a warning to the latter. "I teſtify in the Lord, that henceforth ye walk not as other Gentiles walk."

1. Theſe Gentiles walked *in the vanity of their mind.* The apoſtle Peter, deſcribing the corruptions of the Heathens, ſays, "They walked in abominable idolatries."

The falſe deities which the Gentiles worſhipped, are often called *vanities.* The apoſtles preached, "that they ſhould turn from *theſe vanities* to the living God, who made heaven and earth." On account of their worſhipping theſe vanities, the apoſtle ſays, "They became *vain in their imaginations,* and their *fooliſh* heart was darkened; profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became *fools,* and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beaſts and creeping things; where-

fore God gave them up to uncleanneſs through the luſts of their own hearts—and to vile affections and a reprobate mind, to do things which were not ſeemly."

The prevalence of idolatry in the world is a melancholy proof of the depravity of human nature. The apoſtle ſays, "The inviſible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead."—"That which may be known of God was manifeſt even to the Heathens, for God had ſhewed it to them, ſo that they were without excuſe." The reaſon why they changed the truth of God into a lie, was not becauſe God had left himſelf without witneſs; but becauſe they did not like to retain him in their knowledge. Diſpleaſed with the idea of one God in whom all perfections met, and on whom all things depended, they invented gods many, and lords many, and worſhipped and ſerved the creature more than the Creator, aſcribing to each deity properties ſuited to their own vain imaginations.—The Pſalmiſt reſolves the atheiſm of the world into the ſame cauſe. "The fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doth good."

Atheiſm and idolatry proceed not from the want of ſufficient evidence, that there is one eternal, all perfect Being; but from that corruption of heart which blinds the underſtanding and perverts the judgment.

We, who have enjoyed the light of revelation, eaſily ſee the abſurdity of worſhipping the ſun and moon, the ghoſts of departed heroes, or images formed by art and man's device. There is, however, a ſpecies of idolatry, leſs groſs indeed in appearance, but equally fatal in its conſequences, which ſtill prevails even among the enlightened

part of mankind. The love of this world, and the ſerving of divers luſts and pleaſures the goſpel condemns as idolatry, warning us, that for theſe things ſake cometh the wrath of God on the children of diſobedience.

We then, who enjoy the light, are not only to acknowledge one all perfect Deity, in oppoſition to Heathen idolatry; but to love him with all our heart, to ſerve him with a willing mind, to ſeek his favor with ſupreme deſire, and to reſign ourſelves to his will without reſerve, in oppoſition to ſpiritual idolatry. If we transfer to earthly objects the regards, which are due only to him, we are as really guilty of idolatry, as they who worſhip an image.

2. The Heathens were *darkened in their underſtanding*.

The underſtanding is that faculty, by which we view and compare things, diſcern truth from error, and diſtinguiſh between moral good and evil. It is to the mind, what the eye is to the body. The eye is that organ, which, receiving the light of the ſun, beholds, through this medium, ſurrounding objects, and diſtinguiſhes one from another. The underſtanding is that faculty, which receives the knowledge of moral things, and diſcerns their relations and differences.

In theſe Heathens the underſtanding was darkened—not in reſpect of natural things; for, in uſeful arts and liberal ſciences, many of them greatly excelled—but in reſpect of moral truth and obligation. Here profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools.

Their darkneſs was owing, not ſolely to the want of revelation, but alſo to the want of an honeſt and good heart. The apoſtle ſays, "They knew not what might have been known of God."—"They underſtood not what God had ſhewed them."

There are thoſe under the goſpel, who, through careleſſneſs and inattention, live criminally igno-

rant of the plain and important doctrines of religion. The apoſtle ſays to the Corinthians, "Some have not the knowledge of God: I ſpeak this to your ſhame." He reproves the Hebrews, becauſe "they were dull of hearing; and when, for the time, they ought to have been teachers of others, they ſtill had need, that one ſhould teach them again, what were the firſt principles of the oracles of God."

If the ignorant of the Heathens was, in any degree, to be imputed to their own corrupt hearts, How great is the corruption, and how aggravated the guilt of thoſe, who, under the goſpel, remain ignorant of the things which eſſentially relate to their duty and ſalvation?

Farther: The underſtanding is darkened in ſome, who have a ſuperior knowledge of religion. There are thoſe, "who ſeeing, do not perceive; and hearing, do not underſtand; whoſe heart is waxed groſs, and who have cloſed their eyes, leſt they ſhould ſee with their eyes, and underſtand with their heart, and ſhould turn and be healed."

Some, who under the advantages of a good education, acquire a competent knowledge of religious truths, are ſtill blind and inſenſible to the excellence and importance of thoſe truths, and are no more governed by them, than if they had never learned them. To ſuch may be applied what the apoſtle ſays to the Corinthians: "The natural," or ſenſual, "man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs to him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned." Men of ſenſual and vicious minds, after all their knowledge, may be ſaid to be in darkneſs, becauſe they know nothing yet as they ought to know. Their knowledge deſcends not into their hearts to influence their tempers and direct their actions, but it lies uſeleſs in their heads.

When ſuch as theſe are recovered from a ſt
ſin, though they ſhould acquire no new knowl
of the doctrines and precepts of the goſpel, yet
may be ſaid to be enlightened, becauſe they
new apprehenſions of divine things, ſee them
more convincing light, attend to them with gr
earneſtneſs, and feel from them a more pow
influence. Religion conſiſts not merely in a k
ledge of, and aſſent to divine truths; but in,
a conformity of heart to their nature and de
and in ſuch a view of their reality and import
as will bring the whole man under their gov
ment.

3. Theſe Epheſians, *were alienated* in their l
then ſtate, *from the life of God, through the ignor
that was in them, becauſe of the blindneſs*, or hard
of their heart.

By *the life of God* is intended a *holy* and *ſpir*
life. This is called *the life of God*, becauſe it
ſiſts in a conformity to his character, and lead
the enjoyment of his favor. The Chriſtian, re
ed after the image of God, lives no longer to
luſts of men, but to the will of God. He aſſi
not himſelf according to his former luſts in hi
norance, but as God, who has called him is h
ſo is he holy in all manner of converſation.

Theſe Epheſians were once alienated from
a life, and their unconverted neighbors were ſo
They walked according to the courſe of the wo
not according to the will of God. They fulfi
the deſires of the fleſh; not the dictates of
Spirit.

This part of the character of the Heathen w
is applicable to every habitual ſinner. Our apo
ſays to the Romans, "The carnal mind is enm
againſt God; for it is not ſubject to the law
God, nor, indeed, can be."—"They, who are
the fleſh," under the government of fleſhly lu
and vicious habits, "cannot pleaſe God." To

ians he ſays, "You, who were ſometime a-
ed, and enemies in your minds by wicked-
, he hath now reconciled." St. James ſays,
friendſhip of the world is enmity with God.
oever therefore will be a friend of the world,
enemy of God."

e religion conſiſts in the conformity; wick-
in the contrariety of the ſoul to the charac-
d will of God. Every habitual ſinner is a-
ed from, and an enemy to God: He poſſeſſes
tempers, and does thoſe works, which are op-
to the divine nature, and condemned by the
law. In this alienation from God greatly
ts the evil of ſin; and from this alſo princi-
ariſes its danger. Hence appears the im-
ice of an immediate repentance; for as long
ſinner continues in the love and practice of
ty, he is an enemy to God, lies under his diſ-
re, and is expoſed to his wrath. By the ac-
rning of the heart from ſin to God, and by
ubſequent works of holineſs, the Chriſtian
judge of the ſincerity of his repentance, and
ality of his pardon. The true penitent loves
llows that life of God, to which once he
iſaffected, and from which he was alienated.
is alienation, the apoſtle ſays, was "through
norance, which proceeded from the blindneſs,
rdneſs of the heart."

ticular wrong actions may, in many caſes, be
ed on the ground of unavoidable ignorance.
at ignorance which is the effect of hardneſs
rt cannot be admitted as an excuſe. The a-
here mentions ignorance as an aggravation;
an extenuation of the guilt of theſe Gentiles;
is ignorance had its foundation in the obſti-
and perverſeneſs of the mind. Such a kind
orance, being in itſelf criminal, will not ex-
he ſins which follow from it.

Though ignorance may be pleaded in excuſe or extenuation of ſome particular actions, yet an habitual alienation from virtue, and a cuſtomary devotedneſs to a vicious life can never avail itſelf of this plea. An honeſt man may misjudge concerning the propriety of certain inſtances of conduct: But the difference between virtue and vice in general is obvious to the reaſon, and palpable to the conſcience of every man, who is not groſsly blinded by his luſts, and hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin. The apoſtle ſays concerning the Gentiles in general, "Theſe, having not the law, are a law unto themſelves; which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts, the mean while, accuſing, or elſe excuſing one another."

Now if *their* alienation from a virtuous life was without excuſe, What excuſe will be found for thoſe, who, under the goſpel, walk as the Gentiles walked? If they, who ſinned againſt the law of nature, could not plead ignorance in bar of puniſhment; what will thoſe plead, who have ſinned againſt the goſpel? If the ignorance of the former was imputed to the hardneſs of their hearts; to what more favorable cauſe can be imputed the ignorance of ſome, and the diſobedience of others, under the pureſt light of revelation? The Heathens had ſome apprehenſion of the judgment of God againſt many of the ſins which they practiſed; but by the goſpel the wrath of God is clearly revealed from heaven againſt *all* ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. God will finally judge all men according to the works which they have done, and the light which they have enjoyed. They who have ſinned without law, ſhall periſh without law; and as many as have ſinned in the law, ſhall be judged by the law; and ſuch as have rejected the goſpel, ſhall be condemned by the goſpel. They



who have known, and yet have not obeyed it, will be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the glory of God's almighty power.

4. It is added, *They were become paſt feeling.* This ſame temper is elſewhere expreſſed by *a conſcience ſeared with a hot iron.*

There is in all men a principle of conſcience, which, when doctrinally enlightened, approves virtue and condemns vice. This principle will operate, in a greater or leſs degree, until, by repeated oppoſition, it is ſilenced and ſubdued. In the firſt ſtages of wickedneſs, the ſinner, reflecting on his guilty life, feels ſhame and remorſe, ſelfcondemnation and the fear of puniſhment. A dreadful ſound is in his ears;—deſtruction from the Lord is a terror to him. There is no peace to the wicked; he is often a terror to himſelf. Cain, Herod and Judas felt the power of this inward principle.

There is, however, ſuch a thing as a ſinner's being paſt feeling. By a courſe of iniquity he acquires ſtrong habits of vice: As vicious habits gain ſtrength—fear, ſhame and remorſe abate. Repeated violations of conſcience blunt its ſenſibility and break its power. The ſinner, bent on a wicked courſe, eagerly embraces licentious opinions, which flatter him in the purſuit.——He may, at length, ſo pervert his judgment, as to confound the difference between moral good and evil, and explode the idea of a future puniſhment. He ſays, in his heart, "God will not ſee it. How doth he know? Can he judge through the dark cloud."—When corrupt principles combine with vicious habits, they extinguiſh the ſenſe of conſcience.—We read of ſome, who declare their ſin as Sodom; who are not aſhamed when they commit abomination, and whoſe glory is in their ſhame.

In oppoſition to this unfeeling mind, the renewed Chriſtian has a tender, ſenſible conſcience.——The heart of ſtone is removed, and a heart of fleſh

is put within him. He is ſhocked with the defor
ity of vice—pleaſed with the beauty of holineſs
affected with the remembrance of iniquity—aw
by the authority—alarmed by the threatenings, a
enlivened by the promiſes of God——ſtudious
know what is right—cautious not to offend—watc
ful againſt temptations—afraid even of ſmall tra
greſſions—and careful, in caſes of doubt, to choo
the innocent ſide.

5. The Gentiles, being paſt feeling, *gave the*
ſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs wi
greedineſs.

There are in men certain natural principles, ſu
as fear, ſhame, a ſenſe of honor and an apprehe
ſion of futurity, which operate as a check and r
ſtraint from vice. Theſe, though in themſelves u
impotent to control the corrupt propenſities of o
fallen nature, yet are of uſe to ſet ſome bounds
iniquity, and to keep the world in order; an
when they are aided and directed by a ſuperi
principle of holineſs, they are great helps to the r
ligious life. Let theſe principles be extinguiſhe
or perverted, and what reſtraint will the ſinner l
under? He will commit iniquity with greedineſ
Thus St. Peter deſcribes the character of the Gen
tiles, "They walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, ex
ceſs of wine, revellings and abominable idolatries
and thought it ſtrange that Chriſtians ran not wit
them to the ſame exceſs of riot, ſpeaking evil o
them." St. Paul ſays, "They were filled with a
unrighteouſneſs, uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs and wick
edneſs; and though they knew the judgment o
God, that they who did ſuch things were worth
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the terrors which it holds up to our view, we not only discover a greater vitiosity of mind than they, but shall run to greater lengths in the practice of iniquity.

As water, when it has broken through its mounds, rushes on with more impetuous force, than the natural stream, so the corruptions of the human heart, when they have borne down the restraints of religion, press forward with more violent rapidity, and make more awful devastation in the soul, than where these restraints had never been known. Sin takes occasion by the commandment to work all manner of concupiscence.

Where the gospel has no salutary effect, it is a savour of death unto death. The apostle speaks of such uncleanness among the Christians in Corinth, as had not been known among the Heathens. The greater knowledge in religion men acquire, while their hearts are set in them to do evil, the more capable are they of wickedness. When they have once trampled on the motives to piety and virtue which the gospel offers, their repentance, in human view, becomes more difficult and improbable, because no new motives can be placed before them. If they turn from the holy commandment delivered to them, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

A few reflections here offer themselves to you.

1. You see how extremely dangerous it is, to continue in sin under the gospel. While you do so, you act in opposition to the most powerful motives, that ever have been, or can be proposed to the human mind; and therefore are filling up the measure of your sins with amazing rapidity, that wrath may come upon you to the uttermost.

Sin, in its own nature, is exceedingly heinous.—It acquires a peculiar criminality in those, who practise it in opposition to the light which the gospel affords, the terrors which it denounces, and the

is put within him. He is ſhocked with the deformity of vice—pleaſed with the beauty of holineſs—affected with the remembrance of iniquity—awed by the authority—alarmed by the threatenings, and enlivened by the promiſes of God——ſtudious to know what is right—cautious not to offend—watchful againſt temptations—afraid even of ſmall tranſgreſſions—and careful, in caſes of doubt, to chooſe the innocent ſide.

5. The Gentiles, being paſt feeling, *gave themſelves over to laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs.*

There are in men certain natural principles, ſuch as fear, ſhame, a ſenſe of honor and an apprehenſion of futurity, which operate as a check and reſtraint from vice. Theſe, though in themſelves too impotent to control the corrupt propenſities of our fallen nature, yet are of uſe to ſet ſome bounds to iniquity, and to keep the world in order; and, when they are aided and directed by a ſuperior principle of holineſs, they are great helps to the religious life. Let theſe principles be extinguiſhed, or perverted, and what reſtraint will the ſinner be under? He will commit iniquity with greedineſs. Thus St. Peter deſcribes the character of the Gentiles, "They walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of wine, revellings and abominable idolatries; and thought it ſtrange that Chriſtians ran not with them to the ſame exceſs of riot, ſpeaking evil of them." St. Paul ſays, "They were filled with all unrighteouſneſs, uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs and wickedneſs; and though they knew the judgment of God, that they who did ſuch things were worthy of death, they not only did the ſame, but conſented to, and had pleaſure in thoſe who did them."

The goſpel ſets before us far more powerful arguments againſt a wicked life, than nature could ſuggeſt to the Heathens. If we break over the reſtraints which the goſpel lays upon us, and mock

the terrors which it holds up to our view, we not only diſcover a greater vitioſity of mind than they, but ſhall run to greater lengths in the practice of iniquity.

As water, when it has broken through its mounds, ruſhes on with more impetuous force, than the natural ſtream, ſo the corruptions of the human heart, when they have borne down the reſtraints of religion, preſs forward with more violent rapidity, and make more awful devaſtation in the ſoul, than where theſe reſtraints had never been known. Sin takes occaſion by the commandment to work all manner of concupiſcence.

Where the goſpel has no ſalutary effect, it is a ſavour of death unto death. The apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch uncleanneſs among the Chriſtians in Corinth, as had not been known among the Heathens. The greater knowledge in religion men acquire, while their hearts are ſet in them to do evil, the more capable are they of wickedneſs. When they have once trampled on the motives to piety and virtue which the goſpel offers, their repentance, in human view, becomes more difficult and improbable, becauſe no new motives can be placed before them. If they turn from the holy commandment delivered to them, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning.

A few reflections here offer themſelves to you.

1. You ſee how extremely dangerous it is, to continue in ſin under the goſpel. While you do ſo, you act in oppoſition to the moſt powerful motives, that ever have been, or can be propoſed to the human mind; and therefore are filling up the meaſure of your ſins with amazing rapidity, that wrath may come upon you to the uttermoſt.

Sin, in its own nature, is exceedingly heinous.—It acquires a peculiar criminality in thoſe, who practiſe it in oppoſition to the light which the goſpel affords, the terrors which it denounces, and the

calls which it ſends. The indulgence of it hardens the heart more awfully, and leads to a more dreadful iſſue, than under circumſtances of inferior light. If he who deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without mercy—of how much ſorer puniſhment ſhall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the Son of God?

2. You ſee, that you have need to guard againſt the beginnings of ſin.

Vice indulged lays waſte the conſcience, blinds the underſtanding, perverts the judgment, hardens the heart, and may bring the ſinner to ſuch a ſtate, that he will be without feeling. It is madneſs to venture on a vicious courſe at all. You now feel a timidity in vice;—conſcience reproves you; fear checks you; ſhame reſtrains you: But you know not how ſoon you may break down all theſe barriers, and commit iniquity with greedineſs;—therefore now turn your feet into the paths of virtue.—Make haſte, delay not any longer, leſt you become ſo entangled in your evil habits, that you cannot ceaſe from ſin. "His own iniquities ſhall take the wicked himſelf; he ſhall be holden in the cords of his ſin; he ſhall die without inſtruction, and in the greatneſs of his folly he ſhall go aſtray."

3. My Chriſtian friends, conſider, what you once were, that you may be humble for your paſt ſins, thankful for recovering grace, careful to walk in newneſs of life, and prayerful for thoſe who are ſtill in their guilt. The apoſtle cautions the Epheſian converts, that henceforth they walk not as other Gentiles. He reminds them that in time paſt, they had ſo walked. He would have them know what religion is, and make it appear, by the change in their lives, that they had experienced its tranſforming power. Abſurd is it to pretend, that we are the ſubjects of a real converſion, if ſtill we live according to the courſe of the world, and walk according to our former luſts.

4. Chriſtians muſt be watchful, leſt they be led away by the influence of corrupt examples. "Walk not," ſays the apoſtle, "as other Gentiles walk."—Keep yourſelves from the vices of an untoward generation. "Be blameleſs and harmleſs, the ſons of God without rebuke in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe nation."—"Sleep not as do others, but watch and be ſober."

5. Religion lies much in the temper of the mind. It is the oppoſite to that character of the Heathens, which the text deſcribes. It implies juſt apprehenſions of, and pious affections to God; an influential knowledge of divine truth; a zeal for a godly life; a tenderneſs of conſcience; a hatred of ſin; and a reſolution for every duty. To judge then, whether we are really religious, we muſt look into our hearts, examine our tempers, and obſerve the tendency of our thoughts, and the motion of our affections.

Finally: Since God has placed us under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, which teaches us the life of godlineſs, and urges it by the moſt powerful motives, let us not walk, as others walk, who being blinded in their underſtanding, alienated from the life of God, hardened in their heart, and ſtupified in their conſcience, have given themſelves over to work iniquity with greedineſs; but having been taught, as the truth is in Jeſus, let us put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs; and let us walk worthy of him, who has called us to his eternal glory by Jeſus Chriſt.

SERMON XXVI.

EPHESIANS iv. 20——24.

But ye have not ſo learned Chriſt; if ſo be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jeſus; that ye put off, concerning the former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts; and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs.

THE true happineſs of man conſiſts in the favor and enjoyment of God. Of this happineſs fallen man is incapable, until he has become the ſubject of a moral change. What this change is, the Apoſtle clearly inſtructs us in our text. To the ſeveral things contained in the paſſage now read, I ſhall endeavor to lead your attention.

I. The change here ſpoken of is radically ſeated in the mind. *Ye have been taught——that ye be renewed in the Spirit of your mind.*

It is not aſſuming the name and badge of the Chriſtian; joining ourſelves to this or that religious ſect; or even reforming the outward manners; but it is a renewal of the temper and diſpoſition of the ſoul, which qualifies us for, and entitles us to the happineſs of the heavenly world.

This is elſewhere in ſcripture expreſſed by a *new creature—newneſs of Spirit—a new heart—and the renewing of the mind.*

Theſe terms do not import the creation of new powers and faculties, but the introduction of new tempers and qualities. The apoſtaſy has not extinguiſhed, but perverted the natural faculties; and renovation does not introduce a new ſet of faculties, but it gives a holy direction to thoſe which already exiſt.

It enlightens the eyes of the underſtanding, and gives new apprehenſions of divine things. The doctrinal knowledge, and ſpeculative ſentiments may ſtill be the ſame as before; for the Apoſtle ſuppoſes, that a man may have all knowledge, and underſtand all myſteries, and yet not have charity; but the things before known are now viewed in a new manner; they are ſpiritually diſcerned; they appear real, excellent and important, and thus obtain a commanding influence on the heart and life.

This renovation takes away the ſtony heart, and gives a heart of fleſh; a tender ſenſible heart—a heart which feels divine truths, is afraid of ſin, is jealous of itſelf, ſtands in awe of God's judgments, and trembles at his word.

It ſubdues the carnal mind, which is enmity againſt God, and brings in its place the ſpiritual mind which is ſubject to his law. It caſts down imaginations, and every high thing, which exalts itſelf againſt the knowledge of God; and captivates every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.

It purifies the affections, and directs them to their proper objects. Love and deſire no longer centre in things below; but they riſe to things above. The character of God appears amiable, his laws juſt, his grace wonderful, and heaven ſupremely deſirable. Sin appears hateful, as it is contrary to the nature and command of God, and

ruinous to the ſoul. The world and all its intereſts appear contemptible, in compariſon with the excellency of thoſe glories which the goſpel reveals.

There are new purpoſes and reſolutions. Or if there had been ſome ſimilar reſolutions before, they were not formed on the ſame rational and holy views; but more on a principle of fear; and chiefly on worldly motives; and therefore were weak, wavering and tranſient. Theſe new reſolutions ariſe from a view of the hateful nature, as well as fatal tendency of ſin, and the real excellence and vaſt importance of religion; and therefore are ſtrong and permanent. This is the language of the renewed ſoul, "I will not offend any more; that which I ſee not teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."—"Teach me the way of thy ſtatutes, and I will keep it to the end. Give me underſtanding, and I will keep thy law; yea, I will obſerve it with my whole heart."

II. He who is renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, *puts off, concerning the former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful luſts.*

The new ſpirit is oppoſite to ſin, and ſtrives againſt it. As the motions of ſin work in the corrupt heart to bring forth fruit unto death, ſo grace works in the renewed heart to bring forth fruit unto holineſs.

The new creature immediately applies itſelf to ſubdue the luſts of the fleſh, and the corrupt habits and diſpoſitions of the mind. The Apoſtle ſays to the Corinthians, "In that ye ſorrowed after a godly ſort, what carefulneſs it wrought in you? Yea, what vehement deſire—what fear—what indignation—what revenge?"

The Coloſſians, having put off the old man, are exhorted "to mortify their members, which are on the earth, ſuch as uncleanneſs, inordinate affection, evil concupiſcence, and covetouſneſs which

is idolatry." Theſe corruptions indeed, are not wholly *extinguiſhed* in the renewed Chriſtian; but the *power* of them is broken, ſo that they no more have dominion over him. He carries on a warfare againſt them. He keeps his heart with diligence, brings his body into ſubjection, and abſtains from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul.

A ſpecial reaſon why he exerciſes the affections and luſts of the fleſh, is becauſe he has found them *deceitful*. They have promiſed thoſe pleaſures in the indulgence, which he has never found; and have produced thoſe painful conſequences, and tormenting reflections, which he little expected. He feels the force of the Apoſtle's expoſtulation, "What fruit had ye then in thoſe things, whereof ye are now aſhamed? for the end of thoſe things is death."

As theſe deceitful luſts corrupt the converſation, ſo, when he mortifies theſe, he of courſe puts off his former converſation, which is here called the *old man*; and elſewhere, *the old man with his deeds —the deeds of the body, and the members which are on the earth*. He, in deliberate and hearty purpoſe, renounces all ſin. He watches againſt it, and againſt the temptations which have often beſet him, and prevailed over him. He abſtains from the appearance of evil. And if he is drawn away of his luſts and enticed, he thinks on his ways with godly ſorrow, and turns his feet into God's teſtimonies with new reſolutions to keep himſelf, and fervent ſupplications for grace to help in time of need.

III. The renewed Chriſtian not only puts off the old man, but *puts on the new man*.

As the former ſignifies a corrupt temper and converſation, ſo the latter muſt intend a holy and virtuous diſpoſition and character. The new man is *renewed in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*. The true convert not only ceaſes to do evil, but learns to do well.

Religion is not merely a negative thing, conſiſting in the abſence of evil diſpoſitions and works; it includes alſo poſitive goodneſs, a direct love of God, and a care to obey his commands. The Apoſtle makes a diſtinction between a *righteous*, and a *good* man. "Scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die, yet peradventure for a *good* man ſome would even dare to die." By the former he intends one who leads merely a harmleſs life—who ſimply does no injuries, no wrongs:" By the latter he means one who is uſeful to thoſe around him—one who, governed by a diſintereſted benevolence, is careful to maintain thoſe works which are good and profitable to men. The ſlothful ſervant was condemned, not becauſe he had been miſchievous, but becauſe he had been unprofitable—not becauſe he had deſtroyed his talent, or had employed it in an unjuſt and fraudulent manner, but becauſe he had laid it by in a napkin, and returned it without improvement. Of Oneſimus, after his converſion, Paul ſays to Philemon, "He in time paſt was unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me." In the ſtory of the Jew who fell among thieves, and was left wounded on the road, we ſee the prieſt and Levite paſſing by him with an unfeeling neglect; and the kind Samaritan aſſiſting and relieving him in his helpleſs condition. The former are not charged with robbing or wounding him—but only with inattention and indifference to his caſe; yet, they acted not the part of neighbors. It was the Samaritan only who was neighbor to him; for he it was he who ſhewed mercy on him. In the deſcription of the final judgment we hear the judge condemning the wicked, not for poſitive injuries, but for the neglect of poſitive duties. He does not ſay, ye have taken away my food and raiment, driven me from my dwelling, wounded, or impriſoned me; but he ſays, "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirſty, and ye gave me no

drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; ſick and in priſon and ye did not viſit me."

If we would know, whether we have been the ſubjects of this great change, which qualifies for heaven, we muſt examine, not only what our diſpoſition is with reſpect to certain groſs iniquities, but eſpecially, what our temper is toward God and righteouſneſs; We muſt inquire, whether we habitually poſſeſs thoſe poſitive virtues, and carefully maintain thoſe good works, which conſtitute the new man; as well as whether we have renounced the old man with his deeds.

IV. We are here farther taught, that the pattern according to which the new man is formed, is *the image of God. He is created after God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. He is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.* He is a *partaker of the divine nature.* Beholding the glory of the Lord, *he is changed into the ſame image.*

As the happineſs of heaven conſiſts in the enjoyment of God; the capacity for this happineſs muſt conſiſt in a renovation after the image of God. We muſt be like him, that we may ſee him as he is.

This likeneſs to God muſt, however, be underſtood with ſome limitations.

There are ſome perfections in the divine nature, to which the image of God in us can bear no reſemblance; ſuch as immenſity, immutability and independence. Theſe are objects of our veneration, hope and reliance; not of our imitation. It is only his moral character, which can be impreſſed on our ſouls.

There are, on the other hand, ſome eſſential properties of the new man, to which there is nothing analogous in the Deity. Reverence, obedience, truſt and reſignation, are excellencies in rational creatures; but cannot be aſcribed to the infinite and independent Creator. Faith, repentance, ſelf-

diſtruſt, and hope in divine mercy, are neceſſary exerciſes in us, when we put off the old man, and put on the new man, becauſe we are ſinful, fallen creatures; but to theſe there is nothing in the moſt holy God, which bears any reſemblance. Yea, there are many duties belonging to religion in this imperfect and probationary ſtate, for which there will be no occaſion, and no room, in the world of glory; ſuch as mortification, ſelfdenial, watchfulneſs and prayer.

And farther: In thoſe moral perfections, in which the new man is made like to God, there is only a faint reſemblance; not an equality. Holineſs and goodneſs are in their nature the ſame both in God and in men, but infinitely different in degree. Yea, the image of God, under its higheſt improvements in Chriſtians, while they are in this world, falls far ſhort of that beauty and glory, to which it will be raiſed in heaven. It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be. And after all the improvements that can be made by ſaints, and even by angels in glory, it will ſtill remain a truth, that "none is holy as the Lord; the heavens are not clean in his ſight."

With theſe limitations the new man may be ſaid to bear the image and likeneſs of God.

He is renewed in *knowledge* after the divine image. "God is light, and in him is no darkneſs." All his works are done in wiſdom. Man was made to act as a rational being; not under the blind impulſe of paſſion, but by the calm dictates of the underſtanding. This leading faculty of the ſoul is darkened by the apoſtaſy. Sinners are repreſented as having their underſtanding darkened, and as walking in darkneſs. In the new man reaſon is reſtored to its dominion; the eyes of his underſtanding are opened to receive the light which ſhines, and to diſcern the truth which is revealed; and he acts according to the dictates of this en-

lightened underſtanding. Hence he is ſaid, to walk in the light, as God is in the light.

The new man is created after the image of God in *righteouſneſs*. God is righteous in all his ways; and in this the children of God are manifeſt, every one that doth righteouſneſs is born of him.

The new man reſembles God in *mercy* and *goodneſs*. Theſe are called the glory of the divine character. We are required to be followers of God as dear children, and to walk in love, and to be merciful as he is merciful. As a reaſon why we ſhould love one another, the Apoſtle ſays, "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

The new man is created after God *in holineſs*.—God is of purer eyes than to behold evil. He cannot look on iniquity, nor ſo much as be tempted of evil. The new man, in this reſpect bears the image of God. He has a prevailing hatred of ſin, and love of moral rectitude. He cannot bear that which is evil. When he is tempted to any known ſin, the holy principle within him, if it be in its proper exerciſe, will exclaim, "How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?"—"How ſhall one who is dead to ſin, live any longer therein?" Hence he is ſaid to be a partaker of God's holineſs—to be holy as God is holy.

"The Lord is a God of *truth*," and "it is impoſſible for him to lie." In conformity to this character, his people are called "children who will not lie." The Apoſtle ſays to the Epheſian converts, "Ye have been taught, that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in true holineſs, or holineſs of truth, therefore put away lying, and ſpeak ye every man truth to his neighbor." And to the Coloſſians he ſays, "Lie not one to another, ſeeing ye have put off the old man

with his deeds." He who ſhall enter into God's holy hill, is one that "ſpeaketh the truth in his heart, and, though he ſwears to his own hurt, yet he changes not."

In theſe reſpects, the true Chriſtian is renewed after the image of God.

We ſee what is the main ſubſtance of religion. It is not meat and drink, rites and forms; but righteouſneſs and truth, goodneſs and mercy, peace and love. If religion conſiſts in a conformity to God, theſe muſt be its leading characters, for theſe are his moral perfections.

We ſee alſo that there is an eſſential connexion between piety to God, and the duties which we owe to men; for it is in theſe that we imitate God, and expreſs our love to him. To love God is to love his moral perfections, juſtice, goodneſs, truth and faithfulneſs; and theſe are in us the ſocial virtues. To make light of theſe is to treat the divine character with contempt. "If therefore a man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother alſo." I proceed to obſerve,

V. That this great change in the man is affected by means of the goſpel. The Apoſtle ſays, *Ye have heard Chriſt, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jeſus, that ye put off the old man, and put on the new.* This change was the conſequence of their having learned Chriſt.

Renovation is indeed here ſuppoſed to be the work of God. The new man is ſaid to be "created after God in true holineſs; and to be renewed after the image of him who created him." And elſewhere it is more expreſsly aſcribed to the divine agency. "We are God's workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works."—"We are ſaved by

the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt."—"We are born of the Spirit." All the virtues of the Chriſtian temper are "the fruits of the Spirit."

To define the manner in which the Spirit of God works on the human mind in effecting this change, is beyond our ſphere. "The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and we hear the ſound thereof, but cannot tell, whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit." But whatever be the manner of his operation, it does not exclude the uſe and influence of means.

Chriſtians are renewed *in knowledge*. They eſcape the pollutions of the world *through the knowledge of Chriſt*. They are choſen to ſalvation through ſanctification of the Spirit, and *belief of the truth*. They are begotten *by the word of truth*, and born of *incorruptible ſeed*, even of *the word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever. God hath given us all things, which pertain to a godly life *through the knowledge of him*, who hath called us to glory and virtue. Paul preached to the Gentiles, that he might *open their eyes*, and turn them *from darkneſs to light*, and from the power of Satan to God.

Whether the Spirit of God, in the renovation of the ſoul, works immediately on the will, and, by a creative power, gives a new taſte, and thus prepares the way for the word to have its ſanctifying effect; or whether it firſt opens the underſtanding to diſcern the importance of divine truths, and thus gives them a transforming influence on the will and affections; or whether the heart and the intellect conjunctly are ſubjects of divine operation, are queſtions which may amuſe a metaphyſician, or philoſopher—but they little concern the ſolicitous ſinner, inquiring, what he muſt do to be ſaved, or the ſerious Chriſtian examining the ſtate of his own ſoul. What the great change is, which prepares us for heaven, the goſpel has plainly ſtated;

that the firſt production, and future improvement of this change is, in ſome way or other, the work of divine grace, we are expreſsly taught; that the Spirit of God, both in the converſion of ſinners, and in the ſanctification of believers, works on the ſoul by means of the word, and that, by an attendance on the word, we are to ſeek and obtain the grace neceſſary for theſe purpoſes, we are fully aſſured. And what more need we to know? However thoſe queſtions may be determined, our duty, and our encouragement remain the ſame. "Work out then your own ſalvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure."

The promiſe of God, *A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you*, does not make void the commandment. *Caſt away from you all your tranſgreſſions, and make you a new heart, and a new Spirit; for why will ye die?*

To diſtinguiſh between renovation and converſion, and to call the former the creative work of God, in which the ſubject is wholly paſſive; and the latter, altogether the work of man, in which he is wholly active, is a refinement in divinity, which the goſpel has not taught, and by which I am afraid, Chriſtians are little edified. The ſcripture uſes the terms, regeneration, repentance and converſion, to expreſs the *whole* change requiſite to eternal life; for with each of them eternal life ſtands connected. To this change, taken in its complete ſenſe, the uſe of means, and the grace of God, are both neceſſary. The former is our duty —for the latter we muſt look to him. "Let us do all things without murmurings and diſputings, that we may be blameleſs and harmleſs, the ſons of God without rebuke."

There is one obſervation more, which I will make on our text;

VI. That the change here ſpoken of is exceedingly great.

This, the terms uſed by our Apoſtle plainly import. It is *putting off the old man, which is corrupt, and putting on the new man, which is created after the image of God.*

The obſervable and ſenſible alteration in thoſe converted from the ignorance, ſuperſtitions and vices of heatheniſm, was much greater, than that which takes place in ſuch as have grown up in the knowledge of the goſpel, and under the reſtraining influence of a virtuous education. But in the latter the change is great, though not attended with all the ſame remarkable circumſtances. The real nature and eſſence of converſion, is the ſame in all. It is a change of temper from the love of ſin, to the love of God; and a correſpondent change of life by forſaking the ways of ſin, and turning the feet into God's teſtimonies.

Let none then imagine that they are the ſubjects of this change, merely becauſe they entertain ſome new ſentiments, feel tranſient emotions of the affections in their devotions, or have renounced ſome of their former guilty practices. "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſſed away, and all things are become new: It is a heart habitually conformed to God, and directed to keep all his commands, which proves that we have paſſed from death to life.

Some will, perhaps, here inquire, "If the change is ſo great as has been repreſented, muſt not every one who has been the ſubject of it, certainly know the reality, and even the very time of it?

This will not follow. The ſcripture ſuppoſes, that true Chriſtians, may want the full aſſurance of hope, and therefore directs them to ſeek it with diligence to the end; to examine themſelves whether they are in the faith; and to fear, leſt, a promiſe

being left them, of entering into God's reſt, they ſhould ſeem to come ſhort of it.

There is reaſon to believe, that ſome are renewed in their early childhood, before they have capacity diſtinctly to mark, or ſtrength to retain the things which paſs in their minds.

There are ſome, who, under the advantage of good inſtructions and examples, are, in a great meaſure, ſecured from the corruptions of the world, and the hardening influence of ſin. Theſe may be ſo gradually prepared for the change, and carried through it by ſuch eaſy and gentle ſteps, that they can fix on no particular time, when it began, or when it was completed.

New converts are but babes in Chriſt. There is much corruption ſtill remaining; and the principles of holineſs are weak in their ſouls. Hence they ſee cauſe to call in queſtion the reality of their converſion, till they have had time to prove it by its fruits; and even then, they may find it difficult to aſcertain the time, when the change took place.

It may alſo be remarked, that there is a great difference between one's knowing, that there is an alteration in him, and knowing that this is a renovation in the Spirit of his mind. Every ſinner, who, at adult age, is reclaimed from a life of groſs wickedneſs, is ſenſible of a change. He is conſcious of the awakenings and convictions which he feels, of the reſolutions which he forms, and of the reformations which he makes; and he will probably remember them all his days; but till he has had time to bring forth, with patience, the fruits of repentance, he may remain in doubt, whether all this is the work of ſaving grace.

And even improved Chriſtians may, through diſorders of body, heavy afflictions, preſſing temptations, or miſapprehenſions of the proper evidences of grace, labor under great bondage to fear, and

walk in darkneſs and doubt much of their time; perhaps all their days.

Theſe obſervations ſufficiently ſhew, that however great the change of converſion may be in itſelf, the full aſſurance of hope is not immediately, or neceſſarily connected with it. The humble Chriſtian, impreſſed with a ſenſe of the importance of the change, and the awful conſequences of a miſtake, will be diſpoſed to entertain a godly jealouſy. He will keep under his body to bring it into ſubjection, leſt by any means, after all his experience, and all his hope, he ſhould finally be a caſt away.

Let us then give all diligence to make our calling and election ſure, and adopt the prayer of the Pſalmiſt, "Search me, O God, and try my heart; prove me and know my thoughts, and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting."



SERMON XXVII.

EPHESIANS iv. 25.

Wherefore, putting away Lying, ſpeak every man Truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another.

ALL the graces of the Chriſtian temper have a ſtrict connexion. The renovation of our nature after the divine image lays the foundation for all holy exerciſes and works. Where this has taken place, there will be a prevailing oppoſition to ſin of every kind, and a governing regard to the whole compaſs of chriſtian virtues and duties. The apoſtle obſerves to the Epheſians, that, by the goſpel, "they had been taught to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to *deceitful* luſts, to be renewed in the ſpirit of their mind, and to put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteouſneſs and *true* holineſs, or holineſs of *truth*." But he would not have their religion end here. He reminds them that the tenor of their lives muſt correſpond with this renovation;—that they muſt no longer walk, like other Gentiles, in the vanity of their minds, but according to the pure precepts of that new religion, which they had embraced.

In our text and the verſes following, he enumerates the ſeveral virtues and duties, which muſt appear in the life of the renewed Chriſtian; ſuch as veracity, meekneſs, juſtice, induſtry, purity of ſpeech, kindneſs, chaſtity, &c. all which we ſhall conſider in their order.

The virtue, which our text offers to conſideration is *truth*, or *veracity*, in oppoſition to *lying*. This naturally aroſe firſt to the apoſtle's view from his deſcription of the new man, as having put off *deceitful* luſts, and put on *true* holineſs. We will,

I. Explain the duty here enjoined: "Speak every man *truth* with his neighbor."

II. Shew, that ſpeaking truth is a neceſſary part of the chriſtian character. "Ye have been renewed —wherefore ſpeak truth."

III. Apply the apoſtle's argument; "For we are members one of another."

I. We will explain the duty here enjoined, which, for greater emphaſis, the apoſtle expreſſes both negatively and poſitively. "Putting away lying, ſpeak every man truth with his neighbor."

Truth or veracity, as oppoſed to *lying*, is the agreement between our words and ſentiments; as, on the contrary, lying is a diſagreement between them, formed with a deluſive intention. If by language, writing, or any known and agreed ſigns, we *purpoſely* convey to others falſe notions of things, we are guilty of that ſpecies of deception, which is commonly called lying. In oppoſition to this, we are to ſpeak truth with our neighbors. In all our intercourſe with one another, we are to expreſs the real meaning of our hearts, and to convey, what we ſuppoſe to be, right ideas of thoſe matters, which are the ſubjects of our diſcourſe.

It will be uſeful to explain and ſtate this point a little more particularly.

Let it be obſerved,

1. There are caſes, in which one may ſpeak that which is not true, and yet not be chargeable with lying; for he may have no intention to deceive.—He may have wrong apprehenſions—may have been miſinformed—may have miſunderſtood his information—may have forgotten ſome circumſtance of the caſe; and hence may utter that which is not perfectly true, and yet ſpeak with an upright heart and an honeſt meaning. Let it be conſidered, however, that in all matters of importance, of which we may have occaſion to ſpeak, a regard to truth will induce us to ſeek right information, and to retain the information given us. If we take up reports haſtily, and communicate them confidently; if we receive doubtful matters without inquiry, and relate them with airs of aſſurance, we diſcover, at leaſt, the want of a juſt reverence for truth, though perhaps our fault will not deſerve the harſh appellation of lying.

We are not, in all caſes, bound to ſpeak the *whole* truth. "A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wiſe man keepeth it in till afterward."——"There is a time to ſpeak, and a time to keep ſilence."—"And a wiſe man's heart diſcerneth both time and judgment." We are never to violate truth; but we may ſuppreſs it, in whole or in part, as we think proper, when the man who demands it, has no right to know it. So we may withhold our property from the man who makes an unjuſt requiſition, though we have no right to injure *his*. If the character or dignity of the perſon propoſing the queſtion, forbids our making a peremptory denial; or if the caſe is ſo circumſtanced, that the refuſal of an anſwer would be a diſcovery of the ſecret, we may innocently withhold the moſt material part of the buſineſs, and expreſs only ſo much as to amuſe and divert the inquirer. When Samuel was commanded of God to go to Bethlehem, and anoint one of the ſons of Jeſſe, to be king over Iſrael in-

ſtead of Saul; the prophet inquired, "How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me." God anſwered him, "Take an heifer with thee, and ſay I am come to offer ſacrifice." Samuel, though he ſpeaks only the truth, yet conceals the main object of his journey, which Saul had no right to know; for by his wickedneſs he had forfeited his throne. The prophet Jeremiah had been thrown into a dungeon by the order of king Zedekiah, and by the malicious influence of the princes of Judah. He is afterward admitted to a private conference with the king, in which he inſtructs the king what ought to be done in the preſent critical ſtate of the nation. —The king well knew that if the princes ſhould diſcover the ſubject of his converſation with the prophet, his own perſon would be in danger. At parting, therefore, he charges Jeremiah to conceal it from them; and, if examined, to ſay, "I preſented my ſupplication before the king, that he would not cauſe me to return to the houſe of Jonathan to die there."——"And when the princes came, he told them according to theſe words, and the matter was not perceived." This, doubtleſs, was a part of the converſation; the reſt it was dangerous to reveal, and the princes had no right to demand it; the prophet, therefore, did well to withhold it.

Farther: There are certain figures, common to all languages, which expreſs things differently from the literal truth, but yet are innocent, becauſe, being well underſtood, they convey no wrong ideas. We often uſe a certain number for an uncertain. Jacob ſays of Laban, "He hath changed my wages ten times. By an *hyperbole*, we ſometimes *exceed* the literal truth. David ſays, "I make my bed to ſwim with tears." There is alſo an *ironical* way of ſpeaking, in which the contrary is intended to that which is literally expreſſed. Elijah ſays to the prophets of Baal, "Cry aloud, for he is a god"—

i. e. ye call him a god, though we know him to be vanity and a lie. The prophet Micaiah ſays to king Ahab. "Go up againſt Ramoth Gilead and proſper, for the Lord will deliver it into thine hands;" though he well knew that the king would there be defeated and ſlain. But here was no deception. The king underſtood him perfectly.—His plain, obvious meaning was this, "You depend on the lying predictions of your falſe prophets, who promiſe you ſucceſs in this favorite expedition: It is vain for me to contradict them; for you will not believe me. Go, and try the iſſue: See whether God will proſper you or not.

But though ſuch figures are innocent, when they are introduced with propriety, yet care ſhould be taken, that they are never uſed in ſuch a time or manner, as to be the occaſions of deception. In ſtating this matter, let it be again obſerved,

A man may, in ſome caſes, be guilty of lying, though he ſpeaks no more than what is ſtrictly and literally true. If, for inſtance, he expreſſes the truth with an air of irony, ſo that the hearers will naturally ſuppoſe he means the contrary; or if he divulges a truth, which he was previouſly bound to conceal; or if he affirms that, which he really thinks to be falſe, though it ſhould ultimately be verified in fact; in ſuch caſes he is manifeſtly chargeable with a criminal prevarication. Having ſtated the nature of lying, we proceed,

2. To mention ſome particular caſes, in which men are guilty of it.

Now the groſſeſt kind of lying is *perjury*, or ſpeaking a known falſehood under the awful ſolemnity of an oath. This is a degree of wickedneſs, to which few will venture, until they have been accuſtomed to the lower kinds of profanity and falſehood. The crime is greater in proportion to the magnitude and importance of the caſe in which it is admitted. Perjury in itſelf is a horrible crime,

as it is a contempt of God's power and juſtice, and a trampling on the ſacredneſs of truth; but when it is ſo uſed as to endanger the property, liberty, reputation, or life of a fellow citizen, its criminality is horribly augmented. It is then a ſhocking complication of falſehood, impiety, unrighteouſneſs and cruelty.

Men violate truth, when they affix to words an arbitrary meaning, or make, in their own minds, certain ſecret reſervations, with a deſign to diſguiſe facts, and deceive the hearers. It is cuſtom only that gives words and ſigns their currency. They have juſt ſo much value, as the authority of common uſage has ſtampt upon them. And he who attempts to deceive another by departing from the uſual ſignification of words, is juſt as guilty, as if he had uſed any other words with the ſame deceitful intention.

When we expreſs doubtful matters in terms, and with an air of aſſurance, we may materially injure as well as groſsly deceive our neighbor. We never ought to report for certain the things which we have received only from vulgar fame——from a ſtranger—from men of doubtful veracity—from thoſe, who, though otherwiſe of good character, yet, in that caſe, are known to be under a violent prejudice. Of matters thus circumſtanced we ſhould ſpeak doubtfully, or ſtate our authority, or, which is uſually better than either, ſay nothing at all.

Men are guilty of wanton and malicious falſehood, when they repeat, with romantic additions, and fictitious embelliſhments, the ſtories which they have heard of a neighbor, that thus they may excite againſt him the ſeverer ridicule, or caſt on his character a darker ſtain, or turn to merriment his godly actions, or his innocent peculiarities. If no more than the gratification of a vein of humor is intended, the fiction is far leſs criminal. But even here there is guilt and danger; there is a departure

from that ſimplicity, which ought to guide our converſation; and miſchief may enſue, of which we are not aware; an innocent neighbor may be materially injured; and a habit acquired in ſmaller matters may lead to groſſer violations of truth.

Men may utter a falſehood by the tone of their voice, while their words are literally true. Language is imperfect;—we have not a diſtinct word for every thought;—we expreſs much by our emphaſis and air. You think, perhaps, that you keep near enough to truth, if you repeat the words, which you heard from another; but you may as effectually belie him by a different *manner* of ſpeaking, as by different ſentences. There are thoſe who *make*, as well as ſpeak a lie.

Having mentioned ſome of the ways, in which men violate truth, we will,

3. Conſider ſeveral diſtinct caſes, in which we are bound to ſpeak truth with our neighbor.

We muſt preſerve truth in our common and familiar converſation. This is chiefly intended in the text.

Precepts ſimilar to this often occur in the ſacred writings. "Lie not one to another, ſeeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds."—"Whatſoever things are true, think on theſe things."—"He who ſhall enter into God's holy hill, is one who ſpeaketh the truth in his heart." When friends and neighbors ſit in the ſocial circle, the converſation will often turn upon matters which ſeem to be of little conſequence: But whatever may be the ſubject, their ſpeech ſhould be with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt; their converſation ſhould be with ſimplicity and ſincerity: However indifferent the ſubject may be, a habit of trifling with truth cannot be indifferent. Things which appear ſmall in themſelves, may be great in their effects. Trivial miſrepreſentations, jocular falſehoods and fictitious

news, may painfully diſquiet honeſt minds, and incurably break the peace of neighborhoods.

We muſt ſpeak truth in our commerce with one another. The Apoſtle ſays, "Let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother in any matter." The prophet mentions this as an evidence of the prodigious corruption of the Jewiſh nation, that "they bent their tongues, like their bows, for lies"—that "every brother would utterly ſupplant, and they would deceive every one his neighbor"—"that they had taught their tongues to ſpeak lies, and wearied themſelves to commit iniquity; and when one ſpake peaceably to his neighbor, he, in his heart, laid wait for him." So much deception was practiſed among them, that the prophet ſays, "Take heed every man of his neighbor, and truſt ye not in any brother." Falſehood in dealing ſoon deſtroys mutual confidence; and when confidence is loſt, ſociety muſt diſband.

In giving public teſtimony, we muſt be careful, as on the one hand, to ſay nothing but the truth, ſo, on the other, to conceal no part of the truth, which relates to the matter under examination. A *partial*, and a *falſe* repreſentation of facts may equally operate to the perverſion of juſtice. And if, through our prevarication wrong judgment proceeds, we are anſwerable for the conſequences.

We muſt adhere to truth, when we ſpeak of men's actions or characters. "Speak evil of no man," ſays the Apoſtle. This precept, however, muſt be underſtood with ſome limitation. We may have occaſion to ſpeak the evil, which we know of another, either in our own vindication, or for the ſecurity of our friends. But when no good end is to be obtained, the evil which we know, ought not to be diſcloſed. Private expoſtulation and admonition are all that duty demands. If occaſion calls us to ſpeak, we muſt ſay no more than truth will juſtify, and the occaſion requires. We are not to

ſpeak evil of another, on doubtful evidence, or uncertain hearſay. It is one part of the deſcription of a good man, that "he backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbor." We ſhould conſider, that the ill report may come from his enemy, or from a prejudiced perſon—that there may be ſome miſtake in the ſtory, or ſome circumſtance added or omitted, which gives the whole affair a falſe complexion. If we give a new ſpring to the rumor, we know not how far it will run, nor what a form it may aſſume, in paſſing from one to another. When once it is gone from us, it immediately flies out of our reach. It is not in our power to recal it back, to check its progreſs, or to correct its falſehoods.

It is a precept in the law of Moſes, "Thou ſhalt not go up and down, as a talebearer among thy people." Much miſchief is done in neighborhoods by thoſe officious tattlers, who carry from houſe to houſe intelligence of what one perſon has ſaid of another. Inadvertent things are ſometimes ſpoken, which had no ill deſign, and are not worthy of a repetition. If they are repeated, they uſually aſſume an aſpect, and acquire a magnitude, of which the perſon who firſt ſpoke them had no idea. Had they remained, as they fell from his lips, no harm would have been done, as none was intended. But now, changed by the talebearer, they have perhaps given an offence, which cannot be removed. The whiſperer who revealeth ſecrets, and the talebearer who circulates domeſtic intelligence, often ſeparates the neareſt friends.

Once more: We muſt obſerve truth in our promiſes.

Truth obliges us, firſt, to promiſe nothing different from our intention, or exceeding our ability; and, then, to perform our promiſe according to the mutual intention and underſtanding of the parties. Providential adverſity may, for the preſ-

ent, ſuſpend, but does not abſolutely cancel the obligation to perform our promiſe. With returning ability, the obligation revives. No promiſe can bind us to an action in itſelf unlawful. If we have brought ourſelves into ſuch an embarraſſment, we are to extricate ourſelves by repenting of our criminal raſhneſs. But perſonal inconvenience, or the proſpect of advantage will not exempt us from our obligations. It is the character of the upright man, that, "if he ſwears to his own hurt, he changes not."

II. What we propoſed in the ſecond place, was to ſhew, that a regard to truth is a neceſſary part of the chriſtian character.

The Apoſtle ſays, "Ye have been taught, that ye put on the new man——wherefore, putting away lying, ſpeak every man truth with his neighbor." So he ſays to the Coloſſians, "Lie not one to another, ſeeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man." The Pſalmiſt ſays, "He who ſhall ſtand in God's holy hill, is one who ſpeaketh the truth in his heart." We are taught, that "the fruit of the Spirit is righteouſneſs and truth." On the contrary, falſehood and lying are ſaid to be "of the devil, who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth." And liars have a part juſtly aſſigned them in the place prepared for that lying ſpirit. All wilful and deliberate lying muſt proceed from a corrupt and wicked temper—from pride, malice, envy, covetouſneſs, or ſome reigning luſt, which is oppoſite to the ſpirit of the goſpel. The Apoſtle, therefore, with lying, joins anger, wrath, malice, blaſphemy and filthy communication, as kindred and aſſociate vices. This horrible group the new man has renounced.

Deceitfulneſs is contrary, not only to the expreſs commands of the goſpel, but even to the dictates of natural conſcience; and every man, who walks

in guile, diſſimulation and cunning, is ſo far from the ſpirit of the goſpel, that he is ſunk below that ſenſe of honor and moral fitneſs, which is common to mankind. Every man abhors a liar; and no injury is more univerſally reſented among men, than the imputation of a lie. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of the Heathens, as being full of envy, malignity and deceit; but he ſays, "They knew the judgment of God, that they who did ſuch things, were worthy of death. I proceed,

III. To conſider the argument, which the Apoſtle here urges for the maintenance of truth between man and man. "We are members one of another." We are fellow members, both as men, and as Chriſtians.

As men, we are members one of another. We partake of the ſame nature, have the ſame rights and claims, are mutually dependent, and capable of being mutually beneficial. We are united in the ſame civil ſociety—in families, vicinities, and larger communities, and are under the ſame natural and civil obligations. Mutual confidence is the band, that holds all ſociety together; but there can be no mutual confidence without reciprocal fidelity. Falſehood is a perverſion of that faculty, which is the great inſtrument of ſociety, the faculty of ſpeech; and it diſſolves that confidence, which is the grand cement of ſocial union. It renders property, reputation and life inſecure. It ſubverts order, interrupts peace, ſeparates friends, obſtructs the courſe of juſtice, and, as far as it prevails, it ſpreads confuſion and miſery. Men, therefore, no longer treat one another, as fellow members of ſociety, and fellow creatures ſharing in the ſame rights, then they walk uprightly, work righteouſneſs, and ſpeak the truth in their hearts.

The argument applies, with ſuperior force, to Chriſtians.

As Chriſtians, we are children of the ſame God, the God of truth; we are diſciples of the ſame Lord, the faithful and true witneſs, who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth. We are partakers of that Spirit, who is called the Spirit of truth, and whoſe gracious work is in all goodneſs, righteouſneſs and truth. We are members of the ſame ſpiritual head, even Chriſt. We are united to the ſame ſpiritual body, the church. We are called to the ſame heavenly hope, profeſs the ſame faith and worſhip the ſame great Parent in the name of the ſame Mediator. We acknowledge the ſame goſpel, which uniformly requires ſincerity and truth, forbids all unrighteouſneſs and deceit, and denounces the wrath of God againſt every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

If then we walk in guile and deceit—if we practiſe the vile arts of diſhoneſty, we palpably contradict our human, and eſpecially our chriſtian character. —We act in oppoſition to the nature of God, the dictates of reaſon, the example of Chriſt, the influence of the Spirit, the precepts of the goſpel, the peace of civil and religious ſociety, our mutual relation, and the hopes of heaven.

Our ſubject leads us to reflect on the excellency of the chriſtian religion, which, while it points out the way to future glory, provides for the preſent peace and ſecurity of human ſociety. If we would always ſpeak with that candor and ſimplicity, and act with that fairneſs and probity, which the goſpel recommends, there would be no angry contentions and bitter animoſities; families would ſubſiſt in harmony; neighborhoods would enjoy tranquillity; communities would be free from diſturbances;—ſuits at law would rarely be known; and controverſies, when they happened, would be peaceably adjuſted and equitably terminated. It is the want of this undiſſembled goodneſs and undiſguiſed

friendſhip, which occaſions moſt of the diſquietudes attending the ſocial life.

We ſee the danger of profane language, as it naturally leads to the groſſeſt kind of falſehood, even to perjury in public teſtimony. The man who always ſpeaks with a ſacred regard to truth, eſtabliſhes a character for veracity, which ſtamps a credit on his word, and, in ordinary caſes, ſuperſedes the neceſſity of an oath. If lying had never been known, oaths, for the deciſion of controverſies, would never have been introduced. The man, who accuſtoms himſelf to ſwearing in common diſcourſe, acknowledges the inſufficiency of his ſimple declaration, and holds up to the world a character of doubtful veracity. But if his veracity is doubtful, his oath will not command belief; for the man, who is accuſtomed to profaneneſs, may as eaſily learn to perjure himſelf, as the man habituated to little falſehoods can learn to prevaricate in important matters.

We ſee how dangerous it is to practiſe thoſe diverſions, which are attended with temptations to fraud. In this view, gaming for money muſt univerſally be condemned. Where any thing is depending on the iſſue, there is a ſtrong inducement to artifice and deception. Men excuſe fraud in this caſe, becauſe it is only *gaming*, not buſineſs.—But a habit of deceit acquired in gaming, is eaſily carried into more important tranſactions.

We ſhould educate our children in a regard to truth, and exerciſe over them a government which may ſpeak its ſacred importance.

In a word this ſhould be our reſolution and care, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we will have our converſation in the world.

SERMON XXVIII.

EPHESIANS iv. 26, 27.

Be ye angry and ſin not; let not the ſun go down on your wrath; neither give place to the devil.

THE Apoſtle, having taught the neceſſity of being renewed in the Spirit of the mind, proceeds to inculcate the ſeveral virtues which form the character of the new man. The firſt which he mentions is *ſincerity*, or a ſtrict regard to truth in our common converſations. The next is that contained in the words now read, which is *meekneſs*, or the government of our paſſions. "Ye have been taught——that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. Wherefore putting away lying, ſpeak every man truth with his neighbor. *Be angry, and ſin not.*" This precept is very properly ſubjoined to the former. Falſehood in ſpeech often proceeds from exceſs of paſſion. If we would govern our tongues, we muſt rule our ſpirits. He who puts away lying, and ſpeaks only truth with his neighbor, does not indulge immoderate anger, for this inflames the tongue, and thus ſets on fire the courſe of nature, nor does he give place to the devil, for he was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth.

We will, firſt, ſtate the meaning of this precept, "Be angry, and ſin not," and ſhew, in what caſes we may innocently be angry—next, mention ſome inſtances of ſinful anger—finally, conſider in connexion with this precept, the caution, "not to give place to the devil."

I. We will ſtate the meaning of this precept, "Be angry, and ſin not;" and ſhew how far anger may be innocent.

Theſe words are not an injunction to be angry; but a caution not to ſin when we are angry. Anger is one of the natural paſſions. There are occaſions on which it will involuntarily ariſe. There ſeems to be no more neceſſity for commanding us, in general, to be, or not to be angry, than there is for enjoining, or forbidding hunger, thirſt, deſire, or fear. But as there is ſpecial danger of ſin, when anger is awakened, ſo there was great propriety in the caution, "Sin not in your anger." This evidently is the Apoſtle's meaning.

That we may form a more accurate judgment, how far anger is innocent, and when it becomes ſinful, it will be neceſſary to conſider, what anger is in itſelf, ſeparate from the exceſſes and irregularities, which uſually attend it.

Anger is a diſpleaſure and uneaſineſs of mind, ariſing from the apprehenſion of injury or wrong, and accompanied with a deſire to prevent or remove it.

Mere evil or pain is not the proper object of anger; but it is evil *deſigned*, or *ſuppoſed* to be deſigned; or what we call *injury*. To be angry at providential calamities is *impiety*. To be angry at the inanimate inſtruments of miſchief, or at the natural actions of brutes is *peeviſhneſs*. But the injuries done to us, or intended againſt us by rational creatures, juſtly cauſe diſpleaſure, or reſentment. Whether the injury immediately fall on us or on others, it may be an object of diſpleaſure;

but, in the former caſe, the reſentment will be more ſenſible and active, becauſe the principle of ſelf-preſervation operates more ſuddenly and powerfully, than the principle of compaſſion for others.

This diſpleaſure at injury implies a deſire to remove, or prevent it. We cannot be willing to ſuffer an evil which we think to be maliciouſly intended, or unjuſtly inflicted. A principle of piety may compoſe and calm our ſpirits under injuries, and reſtrain us from violent methods of redreſs; but the injuries themſelves will be painful, while they are felt, and tolerable only until they can be innocently removed.

When violence approaches our perſons, or our properties, the firſt riſing of reſentment is certainly innocent. It is only the call of nature to put ourſelves in a poſture of defence, and to ward off the impending evil.

As we naturally love life, ſo we have an innate deſire of eſteem. Any contempt or reproach offered to our characters, unavoidably excites diſpleaſure, and prompts us to ſelfvindication. And we have the ſame right to guard our reputations as our perſons. Our feelings, in both caſes, urge us to defend ourſelves; but reaſon and piety muſt preſcribe the means, and prudence guide us in the uſe of them.

We feel not only for ourſelves, but for others. Compaſſion is a natural ſentiment, as well as ſelf-love. The ſight of a danger threatening our fellow creatures, rouſes us to interpoſe for their protection. We ſympathize with others in their grief, even though we know not its cauſe. But we never ſympathize with them in the violent paroxiſms of their anger. We rather feel for thoſe who are the objects of this paſſion, and exert ourſelves to defend them againſt it.

Farther: As there is, in our nature, a principle of reſentment againſt injury; ſo there is, in a vir-

tuous temper, a holy diſpleaſure againſt moral evil; and this is ſometimes in ſcripture called anger. It is ſaid, in commendation of the Epheſians, that "they could not bear them who were evil." When Moſes, deſcending from the mount, beheld the Iſraelites worſhipping a golden calf, his anger was exceeding hot, and, in the heat of his indignation, he caſt down and brake the tables of ſtone which were in his hands. It is to be remarked, however, that he did not break the tables, before he came within view of the idolaters; ſo that by this action he ſtrongly teſtified his holy reſentment of their horrid impiety. When David heard Nathan's ſtory concerning the rich man, who, ſparing his own flocks, had taken a poor neighbor's only lamb to make an entertainment for his friend, "his anger was greatly kindled againſt the man who had done this." The virtuous principle roſe in honeſt indignation againſt ſuch an inhuman action. When our divine Lord perceived the prodigious obſtinacy of the Phariſees, "he looked about upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardneſs of their hearts." This example ſhews, that reproof, in caſes of great and obſtinate wickedneſs, ought to be adminiſtered in ſuch a manner, as will expreſs both a compaſſionate concern for the offenders, and a virtuous indignation againſt their vices. Eli's reproof to his ungodly ſons was much too ſoft and gentle, when he ſaid, "Why do ye ſuch things? I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. It is no good report that I hear of you. Ye make the Lord's people to tranſgreſs."—He was not only a father, but a prieſt and a magiſtrate; and he ought, in this caſe, to have acted with greater authority. God therefore ſays, "I will judge the houſe of Eli forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, becauſe his ſons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not."

We have ſhewn how far anger is innocent.

II. We proceed to ſhew, in ſome inſtances, when it becomes ſinful.

1. Anger is ſinful, when it riſes *without cauſe.* "Whoſoever," ſays our Lord, "ſhall be angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment."

Conſidering the imperfection of human nature, and the various intereſts, habits and educations of mankind, you may expect often to meet with things not perfectly agreeable to your wiſhes and feelings. If you will ſuffer yourſelf to be vexed and diſturbed with every trivial affront, every diſreſpectful word, every oppoſition to your opinion, every neglect of the little punctilios of ceremony, you may be in continual vexation of Spirit. It is a weak and vain mind, that can diſpenſe with no little errors in other people's ſentiments, and bear with no faults in their behavior. Before you expect perfection in your neighbors, attain to perfection yourſelf. Before you demand that all men ſhall pleaſe you, ſtudy to pleaſe all men in all things. The more careful you are to gratify the humors of others, the more eaſily you will overlook or pardon their failings.

2. *Raſh* anger is ſinful. "Be not haſty in thy Spirit to be angry."—"Be ſlow to wrath."

You ſuppoſe your neighbor has done you an injury;—but poſſibly you miſtake the caſe—examine it coolly—go and converſe with the man—hear what he has to ſay—admit every reaſonable excuſe. If you are angry before you know there is cauſe, you are angry without cauſe. "Charity ſuffers long and is kind; it is not eaſily provoked; it believeth all things, and hopeth all things."

3. Anger is ſinful, when it *exceeds the demerit* of its cauſe; for ſo far as it overrates the offence, it is without cauſe.

Anger is a ſelfiſh, blind, heady paſſion: It is extremely apt to aggravate injuries by adding fictitious circumſtances. If you meet with a provocation, ſtand upon your guard: You are in greater danger from your paſſion within, than from the ſuppoſed enemy without. Hearken not to its inflammatory ſuggeſtions: Liſten rather to the ſoft and kind voice of Charity; ſhe will tell you to mitigate the offence; ſhe will caution you not fully to depend on the judgment which anger has formed; but to make ſome deductions from it; ſhe will adviſe you to judge equitably, and not according to the firſt appearance.

4. Anger is ſinful, when it breaks out into indecent, reviling and reproachful *language*.

Moſes, though exceedingly meek in his general temper, once fell into ſuch a ſudden heat of paſſion, that he ſpake unadviſedly with his lips. For this tranſgreſſion, he was denied the privilege of entering into Canaan. Our Savior has warned us, that if we expreſs our anger in terms of reproach and contempt againſt our brethren, we expoſe ourſelves to an aggravated puniſhment. It is the advice of an apoſtle of Chriſt, "Be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwiſe, bleſſing; knowing, that hereunto ye are called, that ye ſhould inherit a bleſſing." This advice comes to us recommended and enforced by the example of Chriſt himſelf, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered threatened not, but committed himſelf to him who judgeth righteouſly." The obſervation of Solomon is often verified in experience, "A ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath, but grievous words ſtir up anger.

5. Anger is ſinful, when it prompts to deſigns, or acts of *revenge*.

The divine law authoriſed a judge, when an injured perſon applied to him for redreſs, to give an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. The Jewiſh doc-

tors hence abſurdly inferred, that the party injured, not only was bound to demand retaliation, but might execute with his own hand ſuch a meaſure of revenge as the law preſcribed. This perverſion of the law our Lord condemns; and, on the contrary, teaches his diſciples, that they are, in no caſe, to revenge an injury; and that, in many caſes, eſpecially where the injury is but ſmall, on ſuch as may be borne without great inconvenience, it is better to paſs it by unnoticed, or overcome it by goodneſs, than to provoke freſh injuries, and perpetuate a contention, by ſeeking redreſs in law. "Ye have heard," ſays he, "that it hath been ſaid, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt not evil; but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other alſo; and if a man will ſue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo; and whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." To the ſame purpoſe is the inſtruction given by St. Paul to the Romans. "Bleſs them who perſecute you—bleſs and curſe not—recompenſe to no man evil for evil—provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men—avenge not yourſelves, but rather give place to *his* wrath, who hath ſaid, Vengeance is mine; I will repay—therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; for in ſo doing, thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

6. Anger is criminal, when it ſettles into *malice*.

Though you ſhould not in word or action, attempt any thing like revenge; yet if you are continually brooding over a ſuppoſed injury; ſtudying to aggravate it; calling up in your mind a thouſand unfavorable ſentiments concerning him who has done it; liſtening with pleaſure to every evil thing which you hear of him; and contemplating with delight every misfortune that

befals him; you are guilty in the eyes of that Being who looketh on the heart, and who hath ſaid, "Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thy heart—thou ſhalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge againſt the children of thy people; but thou ſhalt love thy neighbor as thyſelf." It is this *indulgence* of anger, which the Apoſtle ſeems chiefly to intend, when he cautions againſt ſinful paſſion; for he immediately adds, "Let not the ſun go down upon thy wrath." A wiſe man may be *ſurpriſed* by anger; but it *reſts* only in the boſom of fools.

We proceed to obſerve,

III. To this caution againſt ſinful anger the Apoſtle ſubjoins another, which is nearly connected with it. "Neither give place to the devil."

By placing theſe two cautions together, the Apoſtle intimates, that ſinful paſſion often ariſes from the influence of the devil; and that, when paſſion prevails, we, in a peculiar manner, give place to this malignant ſpirit, and yield ourſelves to his power.

"Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſts and enticed." And it is by means of theſe luſts, that the adverſary finds free acceſs to the human mind. Againſt the great Redeemer he gained no advantage, becauſe he found in him no unruly paſſion, or irregular inclination. "He that is born of God, keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not." But "he works in the children of diſobedience;" for "they walk according to the courſe of this world, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind."

If then you would not give place to the devil, ſee that you ſubdue your luſts and rule your ſpirits. Theſe are the traitors within, who hold a correſpondence with the enemy, and ſecretly open to him the gates of the fortreſs. By ſlaying theſe, you will fruſtrate his deſigns againſt you. They who repent and acknowledge the truth, are ſaid to

"recover themſelves out of the ſnare of the devil, by whom they were taken captive at his will." As theſe Epheſians had been "taught to put off, concerning their former converſation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to deceitful luſts," it might be expected, that "they would reſiſt the devil," and no more permit him to work in them, as he had done, "while they all had their converſation in the luſts of the fleſh."

Your firſt care then muſt be to "abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul;" to reſtrain the exceſſes, and correct the irregularities of paſſion, and ſhun thoſe evil communications, which corrupt good manners.

Be watchful againſt the temptations which moſt eaſily beſet you, and keep yourſelves from your own iniquity. Get acquainted with yourſelves, learn the bias of your conſtitution, obſerve your predominant paſſions, and guard the weak ſide, where the enemy will be moſt likely to make an aſſault, and will moſt eaſily effect an entrance.

Withſtand the beginning of temptations. When evil thoughts and dangerous paſſions move within you, immediately diſpoſſeſs them. Let them not lodge there; "for when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin; and ſin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death."

In all your important concerns; eſpecially in matters which relate to religion, act with calmneſs and deliberation. "A prudent man will look well to his goings; but the fooliſh paſs on and are puniſhed." If you haſtily obey every ſuggeſtion, and blindly follow every impulſe, you have no ſecurity; you are taken captive by Satan at his will. When a thought is ſuggeſted, or an inclination excited, examine it before you comply with it—inquire, whether it be agreeable to reaſon and the word of God; whether it be of a holy tendency; what effect the indulgence of it will have on your

temper; what will be the conſequences of it to others; and admit, or reject it, according to the reſult of thoſe inquiries.

That you may not give place to the devil, arm yourſelves with the ſword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Thus did the Captain of our ſalvation. Satan tempted him to falſe worſhip; Jeſus replied, "It is written, Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God." Satan perverted the ſcripture to encourage a raſh confidence in God's promiſe. The Savior anſwered, "It is written, Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord." Store your minds with ſcriptural knowledge, that you may always have an argument ready againſt every evil ſuggeſtion. Attend to the plain, obvious, literal ſenſe of ſcripture, and govern yourſelves by it, that you may not be miſled by the ſlight and craft of them who lie in wait to deceive.

The divine word will furniſh you with an anſwer to every temptation, and an argument againſt every ſin. If you perceive an evil thought or paſſion ſtirring within you, confront it by ſome pertinent paſſage of ſacred writ. If doubts ſhould ariſe concerning any doctrine of religion, go to the word of God and inquire, whether it is clearly and expreſsly taught there: If it is; then ſubmit to its genuine influence; and ſtudy no evaſions to pacify a guilty conſcience. If you are tempted to an action, which the word of God evidently condemns; contrive no excuſes and palliations; but ſay with the patriarch, "How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" If, under a ſuppoſed injury, paſſion urges you to ſome violent meaſures for redreſs, remember the words of the Apoſtle, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourſelves, but rather give place to wrath;" i. e. give place to the wrath and juſtice of God, for vengeance belongs to him. If religion is repreſented in a diſcouraging light; inquire whether this is the light in which

the Savior exhibits it. Think of his kind invitation and promiſe, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls; for my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light. If you excuſe yourſelves from prayer, or any other duty, under a notion that you are not fit for it, and ſhall conſequently incur greater guilt in the obſervance, than in the neglect of it, look into the Bible, and ſee whether theſe are not expreſsly enjoined on *all*, without diſtinction, and whether your excuſe is once admitted there. If you are tempted to delay the work of religion; hear what the ſcripture ſays; "Boaſt not of tomorrow"—'Behold now is the accepted time." Are you inclined to entertain looſe thoughts of the nature of religion? Attend to the Savior's words: 'Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, for many will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able."

Thus you are to repel the temptations which approach you.

Again: That you may not give place to the devil, take time to conſider, whether any motive ſuggeſted in favor of ſin is, in its nature, ſo powerful, as the arguments which the ſcripture offers againſt it. Apply to yourſelves the Apoſtle's expoſtulations with the Romans: "What fruit had ye then in thoſe things, whereof ye are now aſhamed? For the end of thoſe things is death." Employ yourſelves in pious meditations, in prayer, and in converſe with the word of God. When Satan finds a ſoul empty and ſwept of every ſerious thought and diſpoſition, he enters in and dwells there. They, in whom he dwells, are ſuch as give him place. They who reſiſt him, find him a conquerable enemy.

We ſometimes complain of temptations; but our greateſt danger is from ourſelves. They will not

eſſentially injure us, unleſs, by the indulgence of ſome criminal paſſion, we give them place. The beſt men may be moleſted by the adverſary; but ſteady vigilance, and firm reſiſtance, will give them the victory. The God of peace will bruiſe Satan under their feet.

To conclude: Let us conſider the danger to which we are expoſed from the buſy malice of evil ſpirits; and remember that our danger is then the greateſt, when our paſſions riſe the higheſt. Let us be ſober and vigilant, becauſe our adverſary the devil, goeth about, ſeeking whom he may devour: Him let us reſiſt, ſtedfaſt in the faith; thus the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory by Chriſt Jeſus, will make us perfect, eſtabliſh, ſtrengthen and ſettle us. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.



SERMON XXIX.

EPHESIANS iv. 28.

Let him that ſtole, ſteal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

THESE words may be conſidered as an explanation of the eighth command in the decalogue, which ſays, "Thou ſhalt not ſteal." This command, by natural conſtruction, forbids all injuries to our neighbor's property; and conſequently requires us to procure the neceſſaries of life by our own induſtry. "Let him that ſtole, ſteal no more; but rather let him labor."

We will illuſtrate the text in ſeveral obſervations.

I. Here is a general prohibition of *theft*.

This prohibition ſuppoſes diſtinct rights and ſeparate properties. If it had been the intention of the great Lord of all things, that his ſervants ſhould uſe his goods in common, he never would have enacted a law againſt ſtealing; for where one man has no property diſtinct from another, there is no room for the crime, and no occaſion for a law againſt it. If each man has a perſonal diſtinction from all others; and if his limbs, ſkill, invention,

and labor are his own, and not his neighbors, then the fruits of his ſtudy, induſtry and enterpriſe belong to himſelf, and to no one elſe. And whatever he obtains by means not injurious to others, he has a right to poſſeſs, and none has a right to take it from him, either by violence or artifice. By the prohibition of robbery, theft and fraud, God has confirmed to every man his property, and warned others not to invade it.

We are placed in a ſtate of mutual dependence. No man poſſeſſes, or can alone procure every thing which he wants; but each muſt receive ſomething from another. There is among men a great diverſity of talents, abilities and conditions. Some have ſtrength and others ſkill—ſome have riches, others capacity for labor. The rich need the poor man's labor; the poor need the rich man's ſuperfluity; all need mutual aſſiſtance. It was the deſign of providence, that we ſhould live in ſociety and ſubſiſt by reciprocal aid. And this aid ſhould be voluntary. The rich have no right to exact the poor man's ſervice without his conſent, or to uſe it without wages; nor have the poor a right to take the rich man's property without his knowledge, or without compenſation. In ſhort no man has a right to live at the expenſe of others, while he can live by his labor, or to ſupport himſelf by any kind of labor, that is injurious to his neighbors.

Stealing, in common acceptation, is "taking and carrying away another's goods in a ſecret manner, and without his conſent." But this ſpecies of wrong is not the only thing forbidden in the divine law, under the name of ſtealing; for the reaſon of the law extends to every kind of deception and fraud, by which one can injure the property of another. The Apoſtle oppoſes *labor* to theft; and therefore in his idea of theft are included all thoſe unjuſt methods, which men take for a maintenance, rather than apply themſelves to labor. If the in-

jury done to our neighbor is that, which makes ſtealing criminal, then it is criminal to transfer to ourſelves his property in any other way which is injurious to him. "Ye ſhall not ſteal," ſays Moſes, "nor deal falſely, nor lie one to another."—— "Thou ſhalt not defraud thy neighbor, nor rob him, nor ſhall the wages of him that is hired abide with thee until the morning." The Apoſtle ſays, "Let no man go beyond, nor defraud his brother in any matter; for the Lord is the avenger of all ſuch." We muſt therefore underſtand the prohibition in the text, as relating to every unfair, indirect, diſhoneſt way, by which one may transfer to himſelf the property of another; whether it be unfaithfulneſs to a truſt repoſed in him; the embezzlement of goods committed to him; contracting debts without ability or intention to pay them; ſecreting and detaining loſt things which he has found; taking advantage of men's ignorance or neceſſity in dealing with them; making falſe pretenſions of poverty or infirmity to obtain alms; diſabling himſelf by extravagant expenſe, or by voluntary alienation of property, from ſatisfying the juſt demands of creditors; or any other deceitful artifice; for in all ſuch caſes, he takes that from his neighbors, which they did not freely and underſtandingly conſent to part with.

II. This prohibition of *theft* is a virtual injunction of *labor*. For if a man may not live at the expenſe of others, he muſt live at his own; and if he has not the means of ſubſiſtence, he muſt labor to acquire them. The Apoſtle ſays, "Let him that ſtole, ſteal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands." If every man is not bound to work with his hands, yet every man is bound to do this rather than ſteal. No plea of neceſſity can be admitted in juſtification of diſhoneſty. The poor are God's charge; but he allows them not to invade the rights of others. And if the poor may

not do this, much leſs may the rich, who have all things and abound. So ſacred a thing is property, that God declares himſelf the revenger of all ſuch, as in any matter defraud their brethren.

No man has a right to live on *charity*, as long as he can live by labor. The Apoſtle does not ſay, Let him *beg*, but let him *labor*. Charity is much recommended in the goſpel. They who are rich muſt be ready to diſtribute. If there are ſome who are bound to give, there are others who may receive. And who are theſe? The Apoſtle tells us, they are ſuch as *need*: But they who can labor are not the needy; for theſe are commanded to labor, that they may give to the needy. The objects of our charity, then, are thoſe needy perſons, who have not the ordinary comforts of life, nor ability to procure them by their labor. The Apoſtle ſays, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." Let him not be ſupported by your beneficence, but feel the effects of his own idleneſs. There are ſome induſtrious and prudent people, who by the hand of providence are reduced to ſuch difficulties, as really to need the help of their neighbors. To theſe we ſhould ſhew mercy with cheerfulneſs. But to vagrant beggars, of whom we know nothing, but from their own information, we are bound to give no more than what their immediate preſervation requires.

The obligation to labor is not confined to the poor; it extends to all, according to their various capacities. If man was made only to eat and drink, they who have goods laid up for many years, might take their eaſe, eat, drink and be merry. But our Apoſtle teaches us, that we have ſomething to do beſides ſupplying our own wants, and thoſe of our immediate dependents. We are to communicate to ſuch as need. And as long as there are ſuch with us, our wanting nothing is no reaſon why we ſhould do nothing. There are ſome

whoſe condition raiſes them above manual labor; but none whoſe rank elevates them above the obligation to be uſeful. If a poor man ſhould be induſtrious, that he may gain what his own wants require, and ſomething to ſpare to thoſe who are poorer than himſelf, the rich ſurely ſhould deviſe liberal things, and abound in every good work.

The neceſſary affairs of the world cannot be managed by manual labor only: Some muſt be employed in matters of government; ſome in the education of youth; ſome in diſpenſing religious inſtructions. There is an extenſive field for various employments, and every man ſhould be diligent in his own. If a man with his preſent abilities may be uſeful, with greater abilities he may be more ſo. Let every one therefore ſtudy to enlarge his abilities, that he may extend his uſefulneſs.

III. The Apoſtle teaches us, that every man muſt chooſe for himſelf an *honeſt* calling and muſt work that which is *good*.

We muſt employ ourſelves in ſome kind of buſineſs which is lawful in itſelf. Every occupation which ariſes from the condition, and is adapted to the exigences of mankind, is lawful. Beſides real neceſſaries, there are various conveniences, which we may reaſonably deſire; and every employment which contributes to the improvement of human happineſs, is good and commendable. Such an employment we may chooſe, and no other. An occupation good in itſelf may be unſuitable for us, becauſe with our education, means and abilities, we cannot direct it to its proper end. Here we ſhould be out of our place. We are to maintain good works for neceſſary uſes, and that they may be profitable to men. A profeſſion incompatible with our uſefulneſs, if it may be good in other hands, cannot be ſo in ours. A work in which a man makes gain by the expenſe, and enriches himſelf by the loſs of others, is theft embelliſhed and re-

fined. As our calling muſt be lawful in itſelf, ſo we muſt uſe it in a lawful *manner*, with integrity, juſtice and fidelity.

From theſe obſervations we may fairly collect, that *gaming*, when it is uſed as an art to get money, is criminal, for this obvious reaſon, becauſe it is unprofitable; and what one gains by it another muſt loſe. Both parties cannot be gainers, as they may in the employments which ariſe from human wants; and a buſineſs in which one muſt neceſſarily loſe as much as the other gets, is for that reaſon, immoral.

This leads us to another obſervation;

IV. That in all our labors we ſhould have a regard to the good of *others*. The Apoſtle ſays, "Let him labor—that he may have to *give to them who need*."—"Work with your own hands, that ye may walk honeſtly toward them who are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing."

The man who is poor ſhould aim to mend his circumſtances, and to provide not only for his immediate ſupport, but alſo for his future neceſſities. For this end he is bound as well to frugality and ſobriety in his expenſes, as to diligence and induſtry in his calling. They who labor ſtrenuouſly, and ſpend profuſely, take a part as inconſiſtent with reaſon and religion, as they who work not at all. If the Chriſtian muſt work to ſerve the ends of charity, he muſt lay up ſomething for the day of ſickneſs and the time of old age, when he will be unable to work; for the firſt piece of charity to which every man is bound, is to keep himſelf from being a burden on the charity of others.

Next to himſelf, the Chriſtian is to provide for them of his houſehold. If he neglects theſe, he is worſe than an infidel. Nor muſt he provide for their *preſent* maintenance only, but alſo for their *future* ſupport and uſefulneſs. This is beſt done by

training them up to induſtry in ſome honeſt calling, and by forming them to early habits of virtue and piety.

Hence it appears, that the Chriſtian, in ordinary caſes, is not bound to give to others *all* that he can ſave out of the fruits of his labor; for then he could not make that proviſion for future wants, to which juſtice and charity, as well as prudence, oblige him.

It appears alſo that the condition which ſubjects us to the neceſſity of labor, does not exempt us from the obligation to beneficence. The rich are indeed under the higheſt obligations; but the poor are not excuſed: And every one will be accepted according to that he has. The Apoſtle's direction is, "Let every man lay by him in ſtore as God has proſpered him." The command given to the Jews was, that "every third year they ſhould bring forth all the *tenth* of their increaſe that ſame year, and lay it up within their gates, that the ſtranger, the fatherleſs and the widow might come and eat and be ſatisfied." The *tenth* of the increaſe of every *third* year, was the *thirteenth* part of their *yearly* increaſe. The proportion required of all was the ſame; the benefaction therefore would be greater or leſs according to each one's ability. "Withhold not good from them, to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not to thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give, when thou haſt it by thee."—"Give to him that aſketh; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."—"As there is opportunity, do good to all men."

We ſee, that we may not neglect the needy, in pretence that we are not ſo able, as our neighbor is, to relieve them. Perhaps he will excuſe himſelf in the ſame manner. Each one muſt attend to his own duty, and not wait to ſee whether another will do his. If we all wait for one another, nothing

will be done at all. If we think our poverty exempts us from the common obligation to do good, let us inquire, whether we have uſed our time and ſubſtance with prudence and frugality. If our diſability is the fruit of our own vice and folly, it will be but a miſerable kind of exemption from the calls of charity.

The obligation to uſefulneſs lies indiſcriminately on all, whether in a public or private, in an affluent or moderate condition. If one cannot be ſo uſeful as another, yet he may be uſeful; he may fill his ſmaller, as well as the other his larger circle.

That we may be uſeful, we muſt be quiet and peaceable; we muſt injure no man in his perſon, defraud no man in his property, and wound no man in his reputation; we muſt govern our ſpirits, bridle our tongues, and render to all their dues.

We muſt confine ourſelves within our own proper ſphere, for here we can do more good than elſewhere. We muſt attend to our perſonal and domeſtic concerns, the labors of our profeſſion, the order of our families and the education of our children; and never raſhly invade the province, or officiouſly meddle in the affairs of other men. Charity, indeed, will look at the affairs of others; will ſtudy to relieve their wants, rectify their miſtakes and redreſs their wrongs: But ſhe will not pry into their ſecrets, take part in their contentions, obtrude her advice where it is not deſired, nor paſs her judgment where ſhe has not information; ſhe will not go up and down as a talebearer, diſturbing the peace of neighbors and the harmony of families. Leaſt of all will ſhe quit her humble ſtation to arrange the great affairs of communities, and regulate the deep politics of ſtates. She will not exerciſe herſelf in great matters and in things too high for her. She will not clamor againſt public meaſures to diſplay her own importance and awak-

en a ſpirit of diſcontent in others; but will employ her influence to preſerve peace where it ſubſiſts, and to reſtore it where it is interrupted.

We muſt fill up our time with diligence in our proper buſineſs. Our uſefulneſs depends not on our moving in a large circle, but on our filling well the circle aſſigned us. The moon is uſeful as an attendant on the earth; but in vain could ſhe undertake the office of the ſun, to enlighten and warm the ſyſtem.

We are to do every duty in its ſeaſon, and regard each branch of our buſineſs according to its importance. While we purſue the work of our ſecular calling, we muſt labor principally to ſecure our heavenly intereſt.

In all our works, whether ſecular or ſpiritual, charity muſt direct us. In the exerciſes of ſocial religion, we muſt ſtudy the things which may edify others, as well as ourſelves. In our worldly calling, we muſt work with our hands, that we may give to ſuch as need, and may walk honeſtly toward all men. Every one will ſay, "The ruler in his ſtation muſt ſeek the public happineſs, and the miniſter in his profeſſion muſt watch for men's ſalvation; and that their callings muſt not be uſed merely as a trade to get a livelihood." This is very true; and it is juſt as true of men in every other profeſſion. The ſcripture plainly enjoins public ſpirit on the magiſtrate, and love to ſouls on the miniſter, as principles which ought to govern them in their reſpective offices; and it juſt as plainly enjoins piety to God and benevolence to men on all others, as principles which ſhould govern them in their worldly occupations. When it can be ſhewn, that the farmer in his field, the artificer in his ſhop, and the merchant in his ſtore, may labor for the ſole purpoſe of acquiring a fortune, and without any view to the happineſs of mankind; then it can be ſhewn, that a miniſter may preach in the pulpit,

and a magiſtrate may judge on the bench, merely for the ſake of lucre, and without any regard to the rights of men in this world, or their happineſs in the next.

Religion is a common concern, and equally incumbent on all men. Love is an eſſential principle of it, and as eſſential in one man as another. Without a ſpirit of benevolence, the huſbandman, phyſician, lawyer, merchant or mechanic, can no more be religious, than the miniſter can. We are not to ſuppoſe, that religion muſt be a ſpiritual and diſintereſted thing in ſome people only, and may be a ſelfiſh and worldly thing in all others.—It muſt be the ſame in all; and the general nature of it is not in the leaſt altered by the particular buſineſs we purſue in life. One man is as much bound as another to regard the temporal happineſs and eternal ſalvation of his fellow mortals, and to contribute, in his place and according to his ability, to the promotion of them. This command of the goſpel reſpects not merely particular characters, but Chriſtians in general. "Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God—give no offence—pleaſe all men in all things, not ſeeking your own profit but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved."

SERMON XXX.

EPHESIANS iv. 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers.

IN this, and in the preceding and following verſes, the Apoſtle inſtructs us, how the renewed Chriſtian ought to walk, that he may prove the ſincerity of his heart, do honor to the religion of Chriſt, and ſerve the intereſt of his fellow men.

Having aſſumed the new man, which is created after the image of God, he muſt put away lying, ſpeak the truth to his neighbor, rule well his paſſions, and give no place to the devil: He muſt defraud no man; but by induſtry in his calling, provide an honeſt ſupply for his own wants, and a charitable relief for the needy and helpleſs: He muſt govern his tongue with wiſdom, and order his ſpeech with gravity, that he may not corrupt the manners, but aſſiſt the virtue of thoſe with whom he is converſant.

The general end to which we muſt direct our ſpeech is, "that it be good to the uſe of edifying." In purſuance of this deſign, we muſt avoid ſuch communication, as would corrupt the minds and

manners of others; and, on the other hand, we muſt ſo ſpeak as to miniſter grace to the hearers.

We will ſhew, firſt, what is this corrupt communication, which we muſt avoid; and, ſecondly, in what manner we may miniſter to the edification of thoſe whom we converſe with.

I. We will, firſt, conſider, what the communication is, which the Apoſtle cautions us againſt.

Corrupt communication ſtands here oppoſed to that which is profitable for edifying, and which miniſters grace to the hearers. It muſt therefore intend ſuch diſcourſe, as would corrupt the principles, and vitiate the manners of thoſe who hear us.

As it was the deſign of the Creator, that we ſhould live together in ſociety, ſo he has made us, not only capable of communicating our thoughts, but ſuſceptible of impreſſions from the thoughts which are communicated to us. The mind is influenced to a virtuous or vicious choice by the thoughts. And as good thoughts ſuggeſted to us, aid a virtuous choice, ſo the ſuggeſtion of evil thoughts tends to a vicious choice. Every kind of diſcourſe, which offers arguments in favor of ſin, which ſtrengthens the operation of dangerous ſentiments—which excites evil deſires and inclinations—or weakens the motives to virtue and piety, may be called corrupt communication, becauſe it tends to corrupt good manners.

David ſays, "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love." He conſiders the indulgence of vain thoughts as inconſiſtent with a real love of, and ſincere obedience to the law of God. Now if evil thoughts, however ſuggeſted, are dangerous, peculiarly ſo are thoſe ſuggeſted in converſation; for theſe we receive as thoughts which have already exiſted in the minds of others—in the minds of Chriſtian profeſſors. If we eſteem the perſon who ſuggeſted them, there is then a preſumption in

their favor. They come to us, not ſimply as thoughts, but as thoughts recommended by example. Chriſtians, therefore, ſhould be careful that no corrupt communication proceed out of their mouth; for, coming from them, it tends much more to corrupt the hearers, than if it came from perſons of a different character and profeſſion.

1. We may underſtand the Apoſtle as cautioning us againſt all *looſe* and *licentious* language.

The precepts, inſtitutions and doctrines of the goſpel uniformly diſſuade from vice, and urge to purity of heart and manners. If, in our converſation, we throw out ſentiments, which contradict this holy deſign—ſentiments which lower the terms of ſalvation, weaken the obligations to virtue, and make vice appear leſs infamous or dangerous, than the goſpel repreſents it—if we call in queſtion the important truths of religion, make light of divine inſtitutions, and treat with an air of contempt a ſtrictly virtuous and godly character, our communication is corrupt in its nature, and pernicious in its tendency.

2. *Enticing* language is forbidden.

"They who themſelves rejoice to do evil, delight in the frowardneſs of the wicked." The number of tranſgreſſors is ſome defence againſt the reproaches of the world, and ſome ſecurity againſt the upbraidings of conſcience. Hence determined ſinners are induſtrious to draw others into a partnerſhip with them. But Chriſtians profeſs to have put off the old man, and to have put on the new man. It may therefore be expected of them, that they ſhould be grieved when they behold the tranſgreſſions of the wicked, and be humbled when they ſee the falls of their fellow Chriſtians. Surely they will not lie in wait to deceive—they will not ſtrengthen the hands of evildoers—they will not cauſe a brother to offend, nor rejoice even when an enemy falleth.

3. Corrupt communication includes all kinds of *vain* diſcourſe—all ſuch language as offends Chriſtian ſobriety, ſeriouſneſs and gravity, ſavors of profaneneſs and impiety, or borders on obſcenity and lewdneſs. The Apoſtle recommends ſuch ſpeech as miniſters *grace* to the hearers—ſuch as is ſavory and grateful. To this he oppoſes *corrupt* ſpeech—that which is offenſive and diſguſtful to the ſober and virtuous—that which indicates a carnal taſte, and tends to vitiate and debauch the hearers. This corrupt communication he more fully explains in the next chapter. "Let not uncleanneſs be once named among you, who are ſaints, neither filthineſs, nor fooliſh talking, nor jeſting, which are not convenient."

The Apoſtle ſpeaks, as if he would not ſuſpect that a profeſſor of religion can *addict* himſelf to this kind of language. He intimates his fears, however, that in ſome unguarded hours; in ſome ſeaſons of uncommon cheerfulneſs, one may happen to be *betrayed* into it. He therefore ſays, "Let *no* corrupt communication proceed out of *your* mouth." Watch over your heart and tongue, on all occaſions and in all companies, that you never admit a ſentiment which would pain your own conſcience in the reflection, nor once let ſlip an expreſſion, which would corrupt the minds of others in its conſequences. Remember that you are called *ſaints*. Let your language be ſuch as becomes your character. Let not uncleanneſs, fooliſh talking, or bitter jeſting, be once uttered by you, in ſuch a manner as contradicts this ſacred character, wounds the virtuous feelings of your Chriſtian brethren, or encourages vice among the looſer part of mankind.

St. James ſays, "If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man, and able alſo to bridle the whole body." David reſolved, "I will take heed to my ways, that I ſin not with my tongue:

I will keep my mouth with a bridle." The moſt watchful Chriſtians may probably confeſs, that they ſometimes have been off their guard; and in the free hours of ſocial converſation have uttered thoſe things, which on ſober reflection, they would wiſh to recal. The recollection of theſe heedleſs moments ſhould awaken a ſeverer caution. Saints ſhould remember that their reputation, their uſefulneſs, yea, their very religion depends on the good government of their tongue. "For every idle word they muſt give an account. By their words they will be juſtified or condemned. If they ſeem to themſelves to be religious, and bridle not their tongue, their religion is vain."

II. We are, ſecondly, to conſider that communication, which is good to the uſe of edifying, and which miniſters grace to the hearers.

The end of ſpeech is, that we may be uſeful to others, either by mutual converſation, public inſtruction, or ſocial devotion. To regard this benevolent purpoſe, Chriſtians are under ſpecial obligations, as they have expreſsly covenanted together to aſſiſt one another in the great concerns of religion and immortality.

Solomon obſerves, that "the lips of the righteous feed many." The good man's aim is not merely to ſerve himſelf, but to diffuſe knowledge, virtue and happineſs, according to the meaſure of his ability, and the extent of his influence. If he would impart his bread to the hungry, and his raiment to the naked; no leſs will he inſtruct the ignorant, warn the thoughtleſs and guide the wandering.

There are various ways in which our ſpeech may be uſeful to edifying.

1. *Inſtruction* is uſeful to edifying.

Parents are to edify their children by teaching them the commandments of God, and talking of them, when they ſit in the houſe, and when they

walk by the way, and when they lie down, and when they ariſe. They muſt early begin this important work, while the minds of their children are tender, and before corrupting ſentiments and ſtupifying habits have gained a preoccupancy. And conſidering the proneneſs of youthful age to forget religious inſtructions, and the dangerous temptations which attend that critical period, they muſt often repeat the ſame things, giving line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little.

Miniſters are to edify their hearers by explaining, urging and applying the great truths of the goſpel. They are to warn every man, and teach every man in all wiſdom, that they may preſent every man perfect in Chriſt Jeſus. They are in meekneſs to inſtruct, not only ſuch as love the truth, but thoſe alſo who oppoſe it, if peradventure God will give them repentance.

Private Chriſtians ſhould edify one another. They who are ſtrong muſt bear the infirmities of the weak. They who have knowledge muſt condeſcend to men of low eſtate, inform their underſtanding and correct their miſtakes.

Much diſputing about religion contributes little to godly edifying. Diſputes are uſually intended rather for gaining a victory, than for giving or receiving uſeful information; and they are oftener conducted with worldly pride and confidence, than with Chriſtian meekneſs and fear. Hence they terminate in bigotry and alienation, rather than in knowledge and charity. But if Chriſtians, laying apart diſputation, would freely and affectionately converſe together on the important ſubjects of religion, they might greatly aſſiſt one another in their ſpiritual concerns, and mightily advance the common intereſts of truth and holineſs. Some have more knowledge and greater abilities than others; and even weak Chriſtians, deeply ex-

good works." We are "to warn the unruly, comfort the feeble minded, ſupport the weak, and be patient to all men."

4. Chriſtians may often edify one another by communicating things, which they have *experienced* in the courſe of the religious life.

We are not to make the experience of others the ſtandard by which to judge of our ſtate; nor *our* experience the ſtandard by which to judge of their ſtate. A communication of experiences with this view, far from being uſeful to, is inconſiſtent with godly edifying. This is to put human experience in the place of divine truth. Neither ought we to communicate to others the ſecret exerciſes of our minds, for the ſake of gaining their eſteem and applauſe. This is the ſame vanity which made the Phariſees pray in the corners of the ſtreets, and ſound a trumpet when they did their alms. Nor ought we to demand from others an account of their ſecret exerciſes for the ſake of judging their hearts. We are to judge nothing before the time. Secret things belong to God. There are many things, in the experience of every good man, which are not proper to be communicated to the world. We are bound to hope favorably of all, who, having made a good profeſſion, appear to walk agreeably to it. Concerning the real piety of our brethren we can have no evidence, but what is external. Whatever information they give us of the ſecret exerciſes of their hearts, the information is external; it is, at moſt, but a verbal profeſſion; and we may as well diſtruſt their ſincerity in this, as in any other profeſſion which they make.

But then, there are many caſes in which it is exceedingly uſeful for Chriſtians to lay before others their temptations, fears, doubts and infirmities, in order to obtain ſuitable counſel and advice. They who are conſulted may, in ſuch caſes, often

ſtrengthen and comfort their brethren by informing them what trials and conflicts they have experienced, and in what manner they roſe above them. And while they thus encourage their brethren, they may gain freſh ſupplies of ſtrength in their own ſouls. This friendly communication awakens mutual interceſſion, enlivens Chriſtian affections, and warms a godly zeal.

5. Converſing on *religious* ſubjects in general, is good for the uſe of edifying.

This tends to the mutual improvement of Chriſtians in divine and ſpiritual knowledge. It ſtirs up their remembrance of things already learned. It confirms their good reſolutions. It rouſes into action the ſlumbering principles of piety and virtue. It counteracts the deadening influence of earthly objects. It relieves the ſoul from the diſtractions of worldly cares. "As iron ſharpeneth iron, ſo a man ſharpeneth the countenance of his friend. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, ſo doth the ſweetneſs of a man's friend by hearty counſel. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for want of knowledge."

We ſee the way in which we are to edify one another. It is by avoiding all corrupt communication, and by uſing that which is good, and which may miniſter grace to the hearers. Therefore, as the Apoſtle directs, "let us walk in wiſdom toward all men; and let our ſpeech be always with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt, that we may know how we ought to anſwer every man.

We are called to be ſaints. We profeſs to be the ſervants of Chriſt, and members one of another. We have covenanted together for mutual edification and comfort. We often meet in the ſame temple, take into our lips the name of the glorious Jehovah, and of the holy Savior. Here we implore the ſame bleſſings for each other, as for ourſelves. Here we employ our tongues in

prayers and praiſes to the holy and merciful Creator, in the name of a crucified, riſen and interceding Mediator. We often recal the pleaſing remembrance of this Mediator, by taking into our mouths the ſymbols of his body and blood. And ſhall corrupt communication proceed out of mouths, which have thus been employed? Let not bleſſing and curſing, purity and corruption, iſſue from the ſame lips.—Let all our converſation be good for the the uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter grace to the hearers.



SERMON XXXI.

EPHESIANS iv. 30.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption.

THIS paſſage ſtands among the practical inſtructions and cautions, which the Apoſtle addreſſes to the Epheſian converts, and which occupy a large part of his epiſtle to them. From an analyſis of the context it will derive no ſpecial elucidation, and we hope it will need no other than what may be given in the courſe of our obſervations upon it.

I. It is here ſuppoſed that there is a divine influence neceſſary to the ſalvation of fallen men. No doctrine is more plainly taught in the goſpel than this.

The conviction of ſinners, and their renovation to a holy temper and life, and the progreſs and perſeverance of the ſaints in their religious courſe, are in ſcripture attributed to the Spirit of God, in ſuch terms and phraſes, as plainly import the neceſſity of his influence to effect theſe important purpoſes.

The operations of the Spirit, ſpoken of in ſcripture, often intend thoſe extraordinary communications, by which the prophets and apoſtles under-

ſtood the deep things of God, foretold diſtant events, and performed ſupernatural works. But beſides *theſe*, it alſo ſpeaks of an influence and aſſiſtance of the Spirit alike neceſſary for *all* men, and alike common to all *good* men.

If we believe ourſelves dependent on God for our natural life, and its daily ſupplies; for wiſdom to contrive and ability to purſue our ordinary buſineſs; it would be abſurd to deny our dependence on him for the principles and ſupports of the divine life, for ſecurity againſt temptations, and our ſafe conduct through this dangerous world, to the kingdom of glory.

We are not to conceive of the common influence of Providence, or of the ſpecial influence of grace, in a manner which contradicts our moral agency; for God treats all his creatures agreeably to the natures which he has given them. But if we ſuppoſe that the concurrence of Providence in our common labors is conſiſtent with our freedom, as well may we ſuppoſe that the concurrence of his grace in our religious duties, is conſiſtent with our freedom. If we believe that the motives and arguments which we propoſe to one another, may influence the human mind without controling its liberty of choice, we muſt believe that God can open the mind to the admiſſion of motives propoſed, without controling this liberty.

II. The influence of the holy Spirit, is expreſſed in ſcripture by a great variety of phraſes.

Chriſtians are ſaid to be *born* of the Spirit—*renewed*, *ſanctified* and *led* by the Spirit—to be *anointed* and *filled* with the Spirit, and to be the *temples* in which the Spirit *dwells*. In our text, and in ſeveral other places, they are ſaid to be *ſealed* by the Spirit.

Sealing in common uſe, is the impreſſion of the image or likeneſs of one thing upon another. A ſeal impreſſed on wax, leaves there its own reſem-

blance. The Chriſtian ſealed by the Spirit receives the divine image on his heart. The word of God is the ſeal—the holy Spirit is the ſealer—and the heart of man the ſubject. When the Spirit ſo impreſſes the truths of the goſpel on the human mind, as to transform it into the divine image, then it is ſaid to be *ſealed* by the Spirit. The plain, literal meaning of the phraſe is, that believers, by the influence of the Spirit accompanying the word of truth, are renewed after the image of God, aſſimilated to the precepts of the goſpel, and wrought into that temper of goodneſs, righteouſneſs and truth, which is the fruit of the Spirit.*

III. Believers are ſaid to be ſealed *unto the day of redemption.*

There is a twofold redemption ſpoken of in the goſpel; the redemption of the ſoul from guilt by the remiſſion of ſin; and the redemption of the body from the grave, and its reunion with the ſoul at the glorious reſurrection. The former is mentioned in this epiſtle, chapter i. 7. "In Chriſt ye have *redemption*, through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins according to the riches of God's grace." The latter, in Romans viii. 23. "We who have the firſt fruits of the Spirit groan within ourſelves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the *redemption* of the body." This is the redemption which the apoſtle intends in our text. Of the ſame he ſpeaks Chap. i. 13. "After ye believed, ye were ſealed with the holy Spirit of promiſe, which is the earneſt of our inheritance, until the *redemption* of the purchaſed poſſeſſion."

The felicity of the heavenly ſtate conſiſts in pure and ſpiritual tempers and exerciſes—in nearneſs to, and communion with God—in the devout contemplation of his character, government and works—in the performance of ſuch ſervices as are aſſigned to all in their reſpective ſpheres—and in the

* See SERMON VII.

ly to the throne of grace for help in the time of need.

How dangerous muſt it be to continue in a courſe of wickedneſs! This is nothing leſs than to oppoſe, grieve and vex the Spirit of God; that kind, benevolent Spirit, who ſtrives with us. "Of how ſore a puniſhment ſhall he be thought worthy, who does deſpite to the Spirit of grace?"—"Vengeance is mine; I will recompenſe, ſaith the Lord. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

V. Here is a ſolemn *caution* againſt grieving the Spirit of God.

This caution is moſt expreſsly given to thoſe who have already been ſealed with the Spirit. But it may alſo be applied to others—to them, who, though not yet the ſubjects of his renewing operations, have, however, been favored with his common motions, in a way of awakening and conviction.

I ſhall point out to you various ways in which men are chargeable with grieving the Spirit.

1. Indifference and careleſſneſs in religion is oppoſition to the grace of God.

If his Spirit ſtrives with men, he is not indifferent to *their* happineſs; and they ought not to be indifferent to their own. If he works in them of his good pleaſure, they ought to work out their own ſalvation with fear and trembling.

While they indulge an habitual negligence of this important work, to which they are urged by the motions of the Spirit within them, they reſiſt and grieve him. He ſtands at their door and knocks; if they open the door, he comes in and rejoices as a welcome gueſt. If they refuſe his applications, he turns away grieved, as a deſpiſed and rejected viſitant.

2. Spiritual pride grieves the divine Spirit.

The influence of grace is inſtructive and humbling. It teaches man his emptineſs, weakneſs and unworthineſs; and excites in him earneſt deſires after pardon and ſanctification. To them who improve this grace, more is given. But a ſoul full of itſelf, and relying on its own ſtrength and holineſs, will be ſent empty away.

The man, who, under a conſciouſneſs of his guilty ſtate, flatters himſelf with an imagination, that he may, at any time, when danger approaches, renew his ſoul to repentance, treats the Spirit of God with contempt. But he who is ſenſible of his dependence on the God of all grace, both for a heart to repent, and for the bleſſing of pardon, will ſeek the Lord while he may be found. And to him, who thus humbly ſeeks, the grace of God is near.

The deceived hypocrite, who, truſting in his own righteouſneſs, thinks that he needs nothing, will reject the gracious counſels of the goſpel. But the ſincere Chriſtian, feeling his own weakneſs, eſteems it his higheſt privilege, that he may come to the throne of grace for a ſupply of the Spirit. And God reſiſteth the proud; but giveth grace to the humble.

3. The Spirit is grieved, when we neglect the means appointed for obtaining his influence.

God has inſtituted particular duties to be obſerved by us with a ſpecial view to this important end. The ſecret and ſocial worſhip of God, the reading and hearing of his word, and the obſervance of ſabbaths and ordinances, are the means of religion. The eſſence of godlineſs conſiſts not in theſe means, but in that holy temper and life, which they are deſigned to produce. Theſe duties become ſubſervient to religion, not merely by their natural tendency to advance it in our hearts, but rather as they are the appointed means of

obtaining the needful influences of the divine Spirit.

God's gracious communications are not always confined to theſe means. They are, however, his ſtated and ordinary methods of intercourſe with us. "Draw nigh to God," ſays the Apoſtle, "and he will draw nigh to you." God has promiſed, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bleſs thee." Our Lord promiſes his ſpiritual preſence in the midſt of thoſe, "who gather together in his name." It was when the diſciples were together with one accord, in one place, that the Spirit was poured upon them. John "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;" and on that day he ſaw Jeſus "walking in the midſt of the churches."

As the Spirit ſanctifies and ſeals us by the word of truth, ſo that we may obtain this benefit, we muſt be converſant with the word. God begins and carries on his ſaving work in men's ſouls, not by immediate revelations, but by his gracious concurrence with their humble inquiries after truth and duty. Hence the Apoſtle joins theſe two cautions, "Quench not the Spirit:"—"Deſpiſe not propheſying."

To other means we muſt add ſerious meditation on divine things, and careful examination of our hearts. Thus we gain a knowledge of ourſelves, a ſenſe of our wants, and an apprehenſion of the importance of ſpiritual bleſſings. While David was muſing the fire burned. In the multitude of his thoughts within him, God's comforts delighted his ſoul. And all muſt be accompanied with prayer. "Aſk and ye ſhall receive," ſays our Lord, "for God giveth his holy Spirit to them who aſk him."

Since theſe are the ways, in which God has directed us to ſeek, and encouraged us to expect the needful ſupplies of his grace; our diſregard to them may properly be ſaid to grieve the Spirit. It



is a contempt of his offered aſſiſtance—an affront to his kindneſs and love.

Ye, who live in the neglect of ſecret prayer, and ſocial worſhip—ye who are ſtrangers to your own hearts, and to the word and ſanctuary of God—conſider, you not only diſobey the expreſs commands of God, but oppoſe and grieve that Spirit, who uſually, by theſe means, communicates himſelf to the ſoul.

4. Oppoſition to the ſtrivings of the Spirit is another way in which he is often grieved.

There are times when ſinners are impreſſed more deeply than uſual, with a ſenſe of their guilty and dangerous ſtate, and of the neceſſity of a ſpeedy repentance. There are ſeaſons alſo, when true Chriſtians are awakened to more lively affections, and more fervent zeal, than what they ordinarily experience. Whatever may be our character, ſuch favorable motions are to be improved. Our Savior has taught us, "Whoſoever hath, to him ſhall be given; but from him that hath not, ſhall be taken away even that which he ſeemeth to have." If we diſobey the calls and neglect the aids of the Spirit, we oppoſe and grieve him; and what we have may juſtly be taken away.

We are not, indeed, implicitly to obey every motion ſtarted in our minds, concluding it, at once, to be divine. There may be motions ſuggeſted by the power of imagination, or by the influence of evil Spirits, which are not to be followed. We ſhould always remember, that the divine influence is not by immediate revelation of ſomething new, and before unknown; but by kind excitation to that which is already revealed or commanded in ſcripture. How powerfully ſoever we may be urged to a particular action, or line of conduct, we are not to proceed, until we have examined the matter, and found it agreeable to the word of God.

By this rule we are to try all inward motions; and as they agree or diſagree with this, we are to embrace or diſcard them. To ſuſpend our reſolution until we can obtain light in a doubtful caſe; or to refuſe compliance with a ſuggeſtion palpably unſcriptural, is not to grieve but pleaſe the Spirit. This is to follow reaſon and the word of God. But when conſcience ſtrongly remonſtrates againſt manifeſt evil, or preſſes to evident duty, then oppoſition or delay, is grieving the Spirit.

5. There are ſome particular kinds of ſin, which are, in an eminent and peculiar ſenſe, oppoſite to the work of the Spirit.

Among theſe may be reckoned impurity, intemperance, diſſipation, and all the vices of ſenſuality. This is the language of the goſpel; "They who are ſenſual, have not the Spirit."—"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is exceſs, but be filled with the Spirit." You cannot be filled with both. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye will not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh." When David fell into the groſs ſin of impurity, God took from him the holy Spirit; and the unhappy offender loſt for a time the joy of ſalvation.

The indulgence of malignant paſſions, as well as of fleſhly luſts, grieves the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit are love, peace, gentleneſs and meekneſs. The contrary tempers are the works of the fleſh, and deſcend not from above, but are earthly, ſenſual and deviliſh. Therefore to the caution in the text, the Apoſtle ſubjoins a diſſuaſive from all bitterneſs, wrath, clamor and evil ſpeaking, and an exhortation to kindneſs, compaſſion and mutual forgiveneſs.

Contentions among Chriſtians are oppoſite to the Spirit. "Ye are builded together," ſays the Apoſtle, "for an habitation of God through the Spirit."—"Walk worthy of your vocation in all lowlineſs, forbearing one another in love, and

keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; for there is one body and one Spirit." Chriſtians can no longer be an habitation of the Spirit, than they are builded together. They no longer walk worthy of their vocation, than they preſerve unity and peace.

Finally: Men grieve the Spirit, when they aſcribe to him thoſe motions and actions, which are contrary to his nature.

If, under pretence of the ſpecial guidance of the Spirit, they blindly follow every impulſe of a heated imagination, every ſuggeſtion of the common deceiver, every motion of their own vanity and pride, they profane and blaſpheme his ſacred name.

The ſcripture directs us to prove every Spirit, whether it be of God. If, inſtead of trying the Spirit which moves us, we raſhly obey every motion that we feel, and aſcribe to the Spirit of God the tempers and actions which his word forbids, we not only are guilty of great impiety, but lay ourſelves open to fatal deluſion.

To diſſuade us from theſe, and all other ſins, what argument can be more powerful, than this which our text propoſes? It is grieving the holy Spirit, whereby we are ſealed to the day of redemption; or, at leaſt, are urged to ſecure a ſhare in the redemption. The offer of redemption is made without diſtinction. They only are already intereſted in it, who have been renewed by the holy Spirit. But even the unrenewed have been the ſubjects of his convincing and awakening influence. It is not neceſſary, that we ſhould wait to aſcertain our character, before we apply to ourſelves the argument. Whatever our character is, we have at leaſt had the offer of redemption, been called to repent, and invited to ſeek the grace of the Spirit, who is forward to aſſiſt us in the reli-

gious life. And who of us can ſay, they have not experienced his ſtrivings within them?

Let us remember, then, that the ſins which have been mentioned, as grieving the Spirit, are inconſiſtent with a clear evidence and ſcriptural hope of our intereſt in the great redemption; and the indulgence of them will moſt certainly cut us off from the glorious inheritance propoſed. And if we fail, alas! we ſhall ſink under this additional load of guilt, that we have purſued our own deſtruction, in oppoſition to the ſtrivings of divine grace; and, while we have ruined ourſelves, we have grieved God's compaſſion and love.

Let ſinners, awed by their danger on the one hand, and animated by their encouragement on the other, flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on the hope ſet before them.

Let ſaints, by a ſteady faith in God, by a diligent attendance on the means of religion, and by the exerciſe of a holy temper, keep alive their Chriſtian joy. And let them walk as becomes thoſe who have the earneſt of the Spirit in their hearts, and are waiting for the day of redemption.

SERMON XXXII.

EPHESIANS iv. 31, 32.

Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.

IN theſe and the preceding verſes, the Apoſtle deſcribes the Chriſtian life. To give us the more accurate and juſt conception of it, he ſhews both what it is, and what it is not—what thoſe paſſions and vices are, which we muſt renounce; and what thoſe diſpoſitions and virtues are, which we muſt cultivate.

We are taught, as the truth is in Jeſus, to put off the old man, and to put on the new man. The old man is corrupt, according to deceitful luſts; the new man is holy after the image of God. The Chriſtian thus renovated muſt depart from evil and do good—put away falſehood, and ſpeak truth—abhor all diſhoneſty and fraud, and work with his hands the things which are profitable—allow no vain diſcourſe to proceed from his mouth, but ſuch only as may be uſeful to edification.

In the ſame manner the Apoſtle, in our text, expreſſes that benevolent and ſocial temper, which Chriſtians ought to exerciſe toward one another.

They are to put away anger, malice and evil ſpeaking; and to be kind, compaſſionate and forgiving, in imitation of the mercy of God, who for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven them.

We will, firſt, conſider what are the evil diſpoſitions and manners which Chriſtians are here required to renounce. We will then ſtate and explain the oppoſite virtues. And laſtly, we will illuſtrate and apply the argument by which theſe virtues are urged.

I. We will conſider the evil paſſions, manners and language, which the Apoſtle cautions us to avoid in our intercourſe with one another. "Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all malice."

1. We are to put away all *bitterneſs*—all ſuch paſſions, behavior and language as are diſguſtful and offenſive to others, wound their tender feelings and embitter their ſpirits. It is an eaſy and obvious metaphor. We all know how *bitter* objects affect our organs of taſte. The bitterneſs, which the Apoſtle intends here, is that conduct in the ſocial life, which affects, in a ſimilar manner, the feelings of others. It is a metaphor which the ſcripture often uſes: A bitter affliction is a very painful, grievous one. To be in bitterneſs of ſoul, is to be in great anguiſh. Bitter words are words which deeply diſtreſs the heart. A fooliſh ſon is a bitterneſs to her that bare him, *i. e.* he is a great affliction to her. We read of thoſe whoſe mouths are full of curſing and bitterneſs—of ſevere and reviling language. Huſbands are directed to love their wives, and not be bitter againſt them. Bitterneſs is here oppoſed to a ſmooth, kind and obliging carriage toward intimate friends.

Chriſtians are to put away all ſuch bitterneſs. Under this metaphor may be comprehended a roughneſs of manners, and ſeverity of temper—a captious, cavilling humor—a ſpirit of oppoſition and contradiction, not only in great, but trivial matters—an aſſuming, imperious behavior toward friends and companions—a diſpoſition to croſs their will, and to criminate at a venture every thing they do, whether right or wrong—a proneneſs to upbraid them with paſt failings, and reproach them for innocent infirmities—a perpetual jealouſy of their intentions, and paſſionate complaints againſt them for accidental errors. or even ſuſpected offences. Such treatment is a bitterneſs to thoſe who have common feelings, eſpecially if they ſtand in the more tender and delicate relations of life; yea, in thoſe relations, coldneſs and indifference are more painfully felt, than direct and poſitive injuries in ordinary caſes. The happineſs of domeſtic life depends on mutual affection and confidence. That neglect which betrays the want of regard, embitters the connexion.

But perhaps no temper is more inconſiſtent with the felicity of ſocial life, than what is commonly called *peeviſhneſs*. There are ſome who are ſubject to ſudden and violent guſts of paſſion, in which they ſay and do extravagant things; but when the guſt has blown itſelf out, it is followed with a comfortable calm; and perhaps the clouds which had been lowering before, are now wholly diſſipated.—So people, afflicted with epileptic fits, in the intervals of their diſorder, enjoy tolerable health: But peeviſhneſs can never be eaſy. It is a reſtleſs ſpirit, irritable at trifles, and diſcharging its impotent ſpleen on every object in its way. Though its force may, in general, be but languid, yet it is extremely troubleſome and vexatious, becauſe it never can be quiet itſelf, nor ſuffer others to be ſo.—Men of violent paſſion, like a muſket, are ſilent

after the explosion. But the peevish are like wild fire, which keeps up a silly noise, and emits an incessant smoke, with little other effect, than to disturb the peace, and afflict the eyes of those who are near.

2. The Apostle in the next place, mentions *wrath* and *anger*, as passions which Christians must put away.

These two words in our language, and in the original, are of much the same import. If there is a difference, the former signifies a heat of temper; the latter signifies this heat wrought into a flame. They both together express the passion usually called *anger*, in all its criminal stages and degrees.

Christians should acquire such an habitual command of themselves, as not to suspect evil without evidence, nor be easily provoked at real evil—not to fall into sudden passion at trivial offences; much less, on mere jealousy and surmise—not to be angry without cause, nor before they have examined the cause, and found it substantial—not to indulge resentment beyond the demerit of the provocation, nor express it in exasperating language—not to render evil for evil, nor take rash measures for the redress of their wrongs—not to brood over their passion, till it grows into rancor, obstructs the exercise of benevolence, and diverts the course of good offices which are due to mankind.

Though anger, considered simply as a sense and feeling of the wrongs done us, is innocent and natural, yet all the irregular and excessive operations of it are sinful and dangerous. They expose us to numerous transgressions, bring on us new temptations, provoke fresh injuries, involve us in unnecessary perplexities, rob us of our peace and selfenjoyment, and disturb the security of all around us.

3. We are to put away all *malice*.

This is a degree of paſſion beyond ſimple anger. It is a fixed, ſettled hatred, accompanied with a diſpoſition to revenge. It is anger reſting in the boſom, and ſtudying to do miſchief.

The Apoſtle by a natural gradation, riſes from the lower to the higher paſſions. *Bitterneſs* is a ſeverity and acrimony of temper. *Wrath* is this ſeverity put in motion. *Anger* is this motion accelerated into violence. *Malice* is this violence operating in miſchievous effects.

Our Apoſtle, elſewhere, with malice joins *envy* and *hatred*, to ſignify its uſual operations. "We were ſometimes diſobedient, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures, living in envy and malice, hateful and hating one another." He ſpeaks of the Heathens, as "filled with all unrighteouſneſs, wickedneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs, envy, murder, deceit and malignity."

Malice ſometimes originates from a ſuppoſed injury. In its firſt ſtage it is only reſentment; but by indulgence it grows into hatred and averſion; and from thence it ripens into malignity and revenge.

Sometimes it takes its riſe from covetouſneſs or ambition. The man, whoſe heart is devoted to the purſuit of wealth or honor, is diſpleaſed with all who ſeem to interfere with him. He is jealous of their deſigns—envies their ſucceſs—views them as his enemies—entertains the worſt thoughts of them—gives vent to his feelings, firſt in obſcure inſinuations, then in bolder reproaches—and by degrees works up his mind into a malignity of temper, which not only rejoices in their misfortune, but plots their ruin.

Malice is a temper which every one condemns in others, but few diſcern in themſelves. It is a ſelfjuſtifying paſſion. They in whom it operates, are blinded by its influence. They call it by an innocent name. They excuſe it on the foot of

ſuppoſed injuries, or the ſuppoſed vileneſs of the object, and their own ſuperior merit and importance. It is the language of this paſſion, "I do well to be angry."

To ſecure our hearts from ſo criminal a temper, we muſt guard againſt it in its lower ſtages, putting away all bitterneſs and wrath.

As one of the common ways, in which malice vents itſelf to the prejudice of mankind, is reviling and defamatory language, therefore, the Apoſtle,

4. Exhorts Chriſtians to put away from them *all clamor and evil ſpeaking.*

By *clamor* he intends noiſy, complaining and contentious language, in oppoſition to that which is ſoft, gentle and courteous.

There are ſome, who are clamorous from the ferocity and ruggedneſs of their tempers: And there are others, who by uſe have acquired ſuch a habit of clamorouſneſs, that whether they are in anger, or only in earneſt, their language is much the ſame. When they give orders or inſtructions, it is in a manner, which, if it has any effect, operates only on fear, not on the more ingenuous principles. If any thing is done contrary to their intention, they condemn it with ſuch precipitancy and noiſe, that no excuſe can be made, or be heard, if it is made. At the moſt trivial inadvertencies they exclaim with as much vehemence, as if one were ſetting fire to their houſe.—Accidental errors are imputed to the worſt intention, and the offender is loaded with the vileſt epithets.

Such language is what the Apoſtle calls *clamor.* This is unreaſonable in any; but peculiarly indecent in Chriſtians; for they profeſs a religion, which exhibits for their imitation, the mildeſt and ſweeteſt examples, and inculcates, in its precepts, moderation and gentleneſs, ſoft anſwers and

obliging manners, graceful ſpeech and winning addreſs.

But what the goſpel more eſpecially warns Chriſtians to avoid is *evil ſpeaking*.

There are indeed ſome caſes, in which we may ſpeak evil of others. Public and notorious crimes, the corruption of manners, and the degeneracy of the times, may be ſubjects of diſcourſe among Chriſtians in a way of lamentation, and for mutual warning and excitement. The evil which we know of another, we may mention in a way of caution to a ſtranger, who, for want of information, might be enſnared. If we are called to bear teſtimony againſt a criminal before lawful authority, we are bound to ſpeak without reſerve, what we know relative to the matter in queſtion.

The frequent cautions in ſcripture againſt evil ſpeaking, reſpect not caſes of this nature; much leſs do they forbid us to ſpeak to the offender himſelf, in a way of friendly admonition and rebuke. It is the command of our divine Lord, "If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault betwixt him and thee. If he hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother."

But we ſhould always remember, that to ſpeak evil of another is a nice and delicate matter.—That you may not in this offend, be pleaſed to obſerve the following rules:

Never believe, much leſs propagate an ill report of your neighbor, without good evidence of its truth. Never liſten to an infamous ſtory handed to you by a man who is a known enemy of the perſon defamed, or who is himſelf infamous for defaming his neighbors, or who is wont to ſow diſcord among brethren, and excite diſturbances in ſociety. Never utter the evil which you know or ſuſpect of another, till you have taken an opportunity to expoſtulate with him. Never ſpeak evil of another while you are under the operation of envy

and malevolence, but wait till your ſpirits are cooled down, that you may better judge, whether to utter or ſuppreſs the matter. Never expreſs the evil which you would ſay of your neighbor, in terms too ſtrong, or in language which would convey an exaggerated idea of his conduct. Never throw out againſt a man broken hints and dark innuendoes, which would leave the hearers to ſuſpect any thing and every thing that ill nature can ſuggeſt. Never ſpeak evil of your neighbor to his known enemy, who wiſhes for an occaſion of ſlander; for he will certainly paint the image anew, and touch it off with bolder colors. In ſhort; never ſpeak evil of a man, when your ſpeaking may probably do much hurt, but cannot poſſibly do any good.

Theſe are reaſonable rules: By a ſtrict adherence to them much evil ſpeaking would be prevented.

II. I proceed to obſerve, in the ſecond place, the Apoſtle exhorts Chriſtians to "be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."

1. Chriſtians are to be *kind* one to another.

The word ſignifies ſuch kindneſs as renders us uſeful.

Kindneſs will not always gratify, but ſometimes croſs the wiſhes of others. To gratify men's vicious inclinations is not kindneſs, but inhumanity—not goodneſs, but injury.

Kindneſs wiſhes well to all men, prays for their happineſs and ſtudies within its ſphere, to promote their intereſt. It is forward to relieve diſtreſs. It will interpoſe to vindicate an injured character. It will warn the heedleſs of their danger. It will reprove vice, and lend its aid to promote knowledge and virtue. In a word, it will do good, as opportunities occur, occaſions require and abilities permit.

2. Chriſtians ſhould be *tenderhearted;* or, as the parallel expreſſion is, in the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, they ſhould put on *bowels of mercies.* They ſhould not be indifferent to the dangers, and unfeeling to the afflictions of their fellow men, eſpecially of their fellow Chriſtians; but, with an intereſting ſenſibility, weep with them that weep; burn for them who are offended; have compaſſion on them who are in trouble; remember thoſe who are in bonds, as bound with them, and thoſe who ſuffer adverſity, as being themſelves alſo in the body.

They ſhould not, however, be guided by a blind, inſtinctive pity; but by an habitual goodneſs of heart, cultivated with reaſon, improved by religion and operating with diſcretion. They ſhould make a diſtinction of objects; and while they commiſerate all who appear to be in affliction, they ſhould regard among them the difference of characters and circumſtances, giving a precedence to the moſt neceſſitous, the moſt friendleſs, and the moſt virtuous; and ſhould exerciſe their charity in ways conſiſtent with other obligations and the general good. The Apoſtle adds,

3. That we are to *forgive one another.*

In this imperfect ſtate, offences will come. If therefore we hope to live comfortably in ſociety, we muſt carry with us a peaceable and forgiving ſpirit.

Forgiveneſs does not oblige us tamely to ſubmit to every inſult, and ſilently to bear every injury. There are wrongs ſo groſs and oppreſſive, that juſtice to ourſelves demands redreſs. And there are ſome inſolent offenders, whom nothing but the terror of human puniſhment will reſtrain. When, and how far we may apply to the laws of ſociety for the redreſs of, or for protection againſt perſonal injuries, wiſdom is profitable to direct.

But under the influence of that forgiving ſpirit, which the goſpel inculcates, we ſhall, on our part, be careful to injure no man; and if, through inadvertence, paſſion or temptation, we have done a wrong, we ſhall, on reflection, be willing to repair it. To thoſe who have injured us we ſhall maintain good will and exerciſe forbearance, as far as our own and the common ſafety will allow. We ſhall be grieved for their guilt, as well as our own loſs; and wiſh their repentance, rather than their puniſhment.—If there is hope of reclaiming them, we ſhall treat them with mildneſs, rather than ſeverity, thinking it better to win them with goodneſs, than ſubdue them with power. We ſhall make ſome allowance for their miſtakes and temptations, and give ſome weight to excuſes in their behalf, not ſuſpecting the worſt, but hoping all things. Providential diſabilities will ſucceſsfully plead for our forbearance; and propoſitions of adjuſtment will be heard with candor. A credible repentance will reinſtate them in our favor and eſteem; and though they continue implacable, they will have a ſhare in our benevolence and prayers.

III. We are, in the laſt place, to apply the argument, by which the Apoſtle urges us to this kind and forgiving carriage. "God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you."

Remember, Chriſtians, what ye once were—ſinners—enemies to God by wicked works—under his holy diſpleaſure, and expoſed to everlaſting death. Think how ye were brought out of this deplorable ſtate—not by your own works, but by the forgiving mercy of God. "It is *God* who hath forgiven you." Though your repentance was the condition on which pardon was vouchſafed to you; yet, conſider, this pardon was granted, not on the ground of any intrinſic obligatory worth in your repentance, but on the ground of Chriſt's mediation, who voluntarily ſuffered for your ſins, offer-

ing himſelf a ſacrifice to God for a ſweetſmelling ſavor. "God *for Chriſt's ſake* hath forgiven you."

This wonderful inſtance of divine mercy is pertinently urged on Chriſtians as a motive to mutual forgiveneſs. God abundantly pardons:—Even where ſin abounds, his grace much more abounds. He propoſes forgiveneſs to all ſinners without diſtinction, and on the ſame gracious terms. He forgives great ſins as well as ſmall, and repeated tranſgreſſions, as freely as the firſt. He renews the tenders of his mercy after multiplied rejections, and waits to be gracious. He forgives without compenſation for injuries done him: he requires only that humiliation and penitence of ſoul, which are neceſſary preparatives for his gracious pardon.—He forgives, though he needs nothing from us, and our righteouſneſs cannot be gain to him. He makes the firſt advances to a reconciliation. He calls us to repentance, and even ſtrives with us, that we may be perſuaded to turn and live. He has redeemed us at a great price, even by the blood of his own Son, whom he hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, that he might be juſt and the juſtifier of them who believe.

Let this example of divine mercy perſuade us to put away all bitterneſs, anger, malice and evil-ſpeaking, and to be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

After our Lord has forgiven us a debt of ten thouſand talents, ſhall we think it much to remit to a fellow ſervant a debt of a few pence? If we have received the pardon of all our paſt ſins, and hope through grace to obtain the remiſſion of our future ones, ſhall we be rigorous and implacable to our fellow ſinners? Let us remember, that an unmerciful, unforgiving temper is an evidence that we never have really repented of our ſins, and that conſequently we ſtill lie under the guilt of them all. He who ſhews no mercy, ſhall have judgment

The goodneſs of God is the glory of his moral character. When Moſes prayed, "Lord, ſhew me thy glory;" this was the divine anſwer, "I will make all my *goodneſs* paſs before thee."

Language affords not ſtronger terms, or higher expreſſions, than thoſe in which revelation deſcribes the goodneſs of God. "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."—"He daily loadeth us with benefits, and we know not the number thereof; if we would count them, they are more than the ſand." His goodneſs is conſtant; "it endureth forever; it fainteth not, neither is weary." It is exerciſed toward the moſt unworthy creatures, in the moſt diſintereſted manner, without hope of a recompenſe. Compared with him, the moſt bountiful among the ſons of men are evil: Even parental goodneſs ſinks and is loſt in the compariſon.

Many wonderful inſtances of God's love to men the ſcripture adduces to raiſe our admiration and gratitude. But the moſt wonderful of all—that which awakens the loudeſt ſongs of angels, and ſhould excite the livelieſt praiſes of men, is the gift of his Son for the redemption of our guilty race. "In this," ſays St. John, "was manifeſted the *love* of God toward us, becauſe he ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."—"Herein is *love*." In this word is comprehended the whole divine character. "We have known the *love* that God hath to us. God is *love*. And he that dwelleth in *love*, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

From this divine example the ſcripture infers our obligation to love our fellow men. "Let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. God gave his only begotten Son, that we might live through



him: If he ſo loved us, we ought to love one another."

Love is the higheſt and nobleſt virtue in the chriſtian ſyſtem. To be merciful as God is merciful, is to be perfect as he is perfect. Charity is the bond of perfectneſs. Chriſtians are therefore required, "above all things to put on charity"—"above all things to have fervent charity among themſelves." This is called "the end of the commandment"—"the fulfilling of the law"—"the ſum of the law and the prophets." Faith, hope and charity are all great; but the *greateſt* of theſe is charity. In the goſpel climax of virtues, you ſee brotherly kindneſs and charity ſtanding at the top. Theſe complete the order of graces, and finiſh the character of the Chriſtian. The grand deciſion of characters, at the laſt day, will be made by a particular inquiry into the exerciſes of this virtue. He who has this, the greateſt of all virtues, has the other; and without this all pretenſions to religion are vain. For this reaſon, when the Apoſtle exhorts us to be followers of God, he particularly reminds us, that we muſt walk in love. We proceed,

II. To conſider the Argument, by which the Apoſtle preſſes his exhortation. "Walk in love, as Chriſt alſo loved us, and gave himſelf for us an offering and a ſacrifice to God for a ſweetſmelling ſavor."

The ſufferings of Chriſt for the ſin of the world were typified and anticipated in the ſacrifices and offerings inſtituted under the Moſaic law. Hence the language of that diſpenſation is adopted in the goſpel; and the death of Chriſt is called "a ſacrifice and an offering to God."

"Chriſt was ſacrificed *for us*." He ſuffered death on the croſs in our behalf and for our ſakes, that we through his blood might obtain everlaſting ſalvation. This is the uniform language of the

goſpel. "He who knew no ſin, was made ſin for us, that we might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him."—"He once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God."—"He bare our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs."—"He gave himſelf a ranſom for us; and we have redemption through his blood."

"The wages of ſin is death." This is the juſt demerit of, and the legal ſentence againſt the tranſgreſſion of man. The wiſdom of God has ſeen fit to ordain, that without the ſhedding of blood there ſhould be no remiſſion of ſin. The great ends of God's moral government required, that there ſhould be ſome ſolemn diſplay of his juſt and holy wrath againſt the diſobedience and rebellion of his ſubjects. To have executed deſerved puniſhment on the offenders themſelves would have been forever inconſiſtent with their admiſſion to pardon and favor. Therefore, that they might be forgiven in a way agreeable to the great and benevolent deſign of God's government, he was pleaſed to appoint and accept an atonement for their guilt. "He ſet forth his Son to be a propitiation, that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of them that believe."

"Chriſt *gave himſelf* for us." He, freely and of his own choice, ſubmitted to all the pains and indignities, which attended a death on the croſs; and he bare them all with reſignation and patience, that thus he might ſave us from the wrath to come.

Here was a full diſplay of his love. The Apoſtle ſays, "He *loved us*, and *gave himſelf* for us."

He who is the Son of God, the brightneſs of his glory—He by whom all worlds were made, and who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, He gave—What did he give? Not one of his creatures—not an angel—not a world—but, what is more than all worlds, he gave HIMSELF——

for *us*, an inferior order of intelligences—ſinners, rebels, under ſentence of condemnation.

He gave himſelf, not merely to become a man, and dwell on earth—not merely to be our pattern, teacher and guide—but to die in our ſtead, and to ſuffer a kind of death peculiarly painful and ignominious. He gave himſelf for us, not in hope of a recompenſe from us, but in his ſelfmoving goodneſs—in his diſintereſted benevolence toward us.

"The offering of Chriſt was a *ſweetſmelling ſavor*." It was pleaſing and acceptable to God, and, through his appointment became efficacious to obtain pardon and grace for men. The ſacrifices offered to God, according to his inſtitution, under the Patriarchal and Moſaic diſpenſations, are called "a ſweet ſavor to him;" and he is ſaid to "ſmell a ſweet ſavor in them." The Apoſtle uſes the ſame phraſes to expreſs God's acceptance of Chriſt's ſacrifice, and its virtue to take away human guilt. God's law is magnified, his character is honored, and his juſtice is ſatisfied with the work which Jeſus, as our Redeemer, has accompliſhed. And penitent ſinners, now humbly applying to the mercy of God, and relying on the atonement of the Savior, will be admitted to favor as freely and completely, as if they had never offended. As Chriſt, who knew no ſin, has been made a ſinoffering for us, ſo we are by faith made the righteouſneſs of God in him. According to the terms of the new covenant, believers receive through Jeſus Chriſt abundance of grace and of the gift of righteouſneſs—they are abundantly pardoned—their ſins are extinguiſhed as a cloud, and remembered no more. They receive life, and receive it more abundantly, than it was promiſed by the covenant of innocence. The righteouſneſs of Chriſt has procured for them immortality far more glorious than Adam, in virtue of his own moſt perfect obedience, could have claimed.

This example of Chriſt's love to us is an argument of great force, why we ſhould love one another. "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Chriſt loved us." As ye are children of one common parent, who has expreſſed for you a moſt affectionate regard, ſee that you imitate his goodneſs in your regards for one another. If you are God's children, then you all ſtand in the relation of brethren. Expreſs your gratitude to God for his parental goodneſs to you, by walking in love toward all his houſehold.—Dare not to indulge in your hearts hatred and enmity to thoſe who are the objects of his love. Dare not to entertain malevolent diſpoſitions toward any of the human race. Where will you find the man ſo unworthy of your love, as you are of the love of God? Since you experience that divine compaſſion, to which you can pretend no claim, think none of your fellow ſinners too low, or too criminal to ſhare in yours.

As God is an inviſible being, whoſe benefits we experience, but behold not the benefactor; therefore, by a natural tranſition, the Apoſtle calls our attention to Jeſus Chriſt, in whom the divine goodneſs and love are made conſpicuous to ſenſe, as well as credible to faith. Chriſt, who is the image of the inviſible God, has manifeſted himſelf in human fleſh, and rendered the divine character familiar to human apprehenſion. That therefore we may imitate the love of the inviſible God, let us look on his viſible image in the perſon of the wonderful Savior, and behold and admire his goodneſs diſplayed in the example of his divine Son dwelling among men. "Be ye *followers* of *God*—as *Chriſt* hath loved us."

He gave himſelf, not only to become a man compaſſed with our infirmities, but alſo to become a victim bleeding for our iniquities. Let us put on Chriſt—aſſume his character, eſpecially his be-

nevolence, meekneſs and love. Vain are our pre-enſions to the character of Chriſtians, if we have not the mind which was in Jeſus, and if we walk not as he walked.

Let us cooperate with the deſign of his death, n our zealous endeavors to advance the glory of his church, and the virtue and happineſs of our ellow men.

Let us condeſcend, in matters of indifference nd doubtful diſputation, to our honeſt and well-meaning brethren; and if there are any whom we eſteem weak, let us more cheerfully bear their burdens.

Let us forgive thoſe who injure us, when they give us tokens of their repentance; and let us entertain unfeigned benevolence to all men, even to the moſt unrelenting and implacable enemies.

In our common behavior and daily converſation, let us not be aſſuming, but humble—not ſupercilious and diſdainful, but meek and courteous.

Let us contribute to the happineſs of thoſe around us, by reclaiming the vicious, warning the careleſs, inſtructing the ignorant, encouraging the virtuous, relieving the neceſſitous and comforting the ſorrowful. This is an imitation of Chriſt's love, and an evidence of our relation to him.

It is obſervable, that, in the goſpel, no argument is ſo frequently urged, as the example of Chriſt, to perſuade us to mutual love, becauſe none is ſo well adapted to influence the mind of a Chriſtian. And it is alſo worthy of remark, that God's approbation of Chriſtian charity is expreſſed in the ſame terms, as his acceptance of the ſacrifice of Chriſt; for charity to our fellow Chriſtians flowing from a ſenſe of Chriſt's dying love, is a virtue of diſtinguiſhed excellence. As the death of Chriſt is called "a ſacrifice for a ſweetſmelling ſavor," ſo Chriſtian charity is called "an odor of a ſweet ſmell, a ſacrifice acceptable, well pleaſing to God."—

When we do good and communicate, we offer "a ſacrifice with which God is well pleaſed."

Let it be our care to follow Chriſt in his goodneſs and love, and to learn of him humility, condeſcenſion, mercy and forgiveneſs. Thus it will appear, that we are his diſciples.

Religion is a plain and obvious thing. It is an imitation of the moral character of God, brought down to human view, and familiarized to human apprehenſion in the life of Jeſus Chriſt.

Whenever you feel a doubt concerning the nature of religion, take your Bible, and ſee what is the character of God—what is the temper, which appeared in Chriſt—what is the life, which he lived in the fleſh; and ſoon your doubt will be reſolved. Thoſe opinions and uſages, which have no influence to promote, or prevent our conformity to the life of Chriſt, cannot be in any reſpect very uſeful, or very dangerous.

We ſee, farther, that the ſacrifice of Chriſt is of great uſe, not only as an atonement for guilt, but alſo as an example of love. Accordingly the goſpel improves it, as well to inſpire us with friendly and benevolent diſpoſitions toward one another, as to encourage our faith and hope in God's mercy. We are too apt to conſider Chriſt's death in that ſingle view, as opening a way for the exerciſe of God's mercy to us: But the goſpel, beſides this, repreſents it as intended to open our hearts to the exerciſes and feelings of mercy to one another. It improves it as an argument to perſuade us, not only to repent of our own ſins, and apply to God's forgiving love; but alſo to forgive one another, as God for Chriſt's ſake forgiveth us. And until we feel on our hearts this effect of the Redeemer's death, we are not intereſted in the heavenly bleſſings procured by its merit. "If, therefore, there be any conſolation in Chriſt, any comfort of love, any fellowſhip of the Spirit, any bowels and mer-

cies; be ye likeminded, having the ſame love, being of one accord, and of one mind. Let nothing be done through ſtrife and vain glory; but, in lowlineſs of mind, let each eſteem others better than himſelf. Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others; and let that mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus."



SERMON XXXIV.

EPHESIANS v. 3, 4, 5, 6.

But fornication and all uncleanneſs, or coveteouſneſs, let it not be once named among you, as becometh ſaints; neither filthineſs, nor fooliſh talking, nor jeſting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger nor unclean perſon, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Chriſt and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words, for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God on the children of diſobedience.

OUR Apoſtle is ſtill deſcribing the Chriſtian life, inculcating the virtues which belong to it, and diſſuading from the vices which oppoſe it.

The preceding verſes, in this and part of the former chapter, ſtate the Chriſtan temper, as it reſpects our fellow men. The words now read inculcate Chriſtian *ſobriety*; and warn thoſe who are called ſaints againſt imitating Heathens and ſinners in *uncleanneſs*, *covetouſneſs* and *fooliſh jeſting*.

I ſhall, firſt, diſtinctly conſider the ſeveral ſins which the Apoſtle here mentions. And, then, I ſhall open and apply the arguments ſubjoined.

Firſt: We will conſider the ſeveral vices here mentioned. "Fornication and all uncleanneſs, and

covetouſneſs, let them not be once named among you, neither filthineſs, nor fooliſh talking and jeſting."

Let them not be once named in a way of approbation or extenuation. Let them not be ſubjects of converſation in ſuch a manner as to encourage you in them, or inflame the criminal paſſions in others. Let them not appear among you, ſo as to give occaſion for you to lament them, or for Heathens to reproach you for them.

I. The firſt ſin here mentioned is *impurity*.

Let not fornication or uncleanneſs be named among you.

The word *fornication* is ſometimes uſed in ſcripture to comprehend the groſſer kinds of uncleanneſs, as inceſt, adultery and proſtitution; but in common ſpeech it is uſually appropriated to intimacy between unmarried perſons who are not within the forbidden degrees of conſanguinity. In this limited ſenſe we alſo find it uſed in the ſacred writings.

To ſecure the proper nurture and education of children, and to prevent confuſion in private families, and in more public ſocieties, God has inſtituted marriage, and ordained, that a man ſhall leave his father and his mother, and ſhall cleave to his wife. That fornication may be avoided, it is required, that every man ſhould have his own wife, and every woman her own huſband. And this relation, where it ſubſiſts, ought to be publicly known. Private contracts, generally admitted as marriage, would expoſe the contracting parties to dangerous frauds and impoſitions, the helpleſs offspring to fatal neglect, and ſociety to endleſs confuſion and diſorder. Though God has not inſtituted any particular ceremony, by which marriage ſhall be ſolemnized, but has left it with every people to adopt ſuch forms as they pleaſe; yet, that it ſhould be formal and public, the ſcripture every where ſup-

poſes, reaſon itſelf dictates, and the cuſtom of all nations confirms.

It will not be pretended, that carnal intimacy between perſons, who have deliberately agreed on marriage, is equally criminal with common proſtitution; but that it is really criminal in the ſight of heaven, no man can doubt, when he conſiders what conſequences would enſue from ſuch a practice generally prevailing. Proſtitutions, under pretext of private contracts, would plead excuſe; honeſt perſons would be enſnared by thoſe who were under previous engagements; infants, from the circumſtances of their birth, would often periſh through neglect; a great part of the youth would grow up in ignorance and idleneſs; families would be ſubject to diſſolution without remedy from law; and the depravity and confuſion of families would ſpread through larger ſocieties.

If the acts of uncleanneſs are criminal, ſo alſo are all impure thoughts and deſires; for theſe proceed from a corrupt heart, and lead to the external acts. David prays, not only that he may be kept from preſumptuous ſins; but that a clean heart may be created in him. The thought of fooliſhneſs is ſin. He who deviſeth to do evil is called a miſchievous perſon. He who looketh on a woman to luſt after her, committeth adultery in his heart.

Under the name of uncleanneſs the goſpel forbids filthy communication, which indicates a vicious diſpoſition in the ſpeaker, and tends alſo to corrupt the manners of others. The Apoſtle cautions ſaints, that uncleanneſs be not once *named* among them. He exhorts them to put away all *filthy communication* out of their mouths; and to have their ſpeech always with grace, ſeaſoned with ſalt; decent, modeſt and ſavory. What is more than this cometh of evil.

Farther: Chriſtians muſt not make proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof; but, on the contrary, abſtain from fleſhly luſts; yea, even from the very appearance of evil; from every thing that tends to ſuggeſt wanton ideas, to excite impure deſires and to ſtrengthen the power of temptation. They muſt withdraw themſelves from all unneceſſary connexion with thoſe, who, with eyes full of adultery, beguile unſtable ſouls, and, with their fair ſpeeches and flattering words, cauſe the ſimple to yield. They muſt hate even the garments ſpotted with the fleſh.

II. The next ſin which ſaints are warned to avoid is *covetouſneſs*.

This uſually intends an immoderate deſire of riches. Our Savior ſays, "Beware of *covetouſneſs*, for a man's life conſiſteth not in the *abundance* of the things, which he poſſeſſeth." The deſire of poſſeſſing an *abundance*, is covetouſneſs.

The ſcripture allows us to deſire and ſeek the good things of the world; for theſe are neceſſary to our comfort and uſefulneſs; but it always teaches us to reſtrain our worldly deſires within narrow bounds, and keep them in a reaſonable ſubordination to heavenly deſigns. The Apoſtle ſays, *Let your converſation be without covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*, in oppoſition to the temper of thoſe, *who will be rich*, and who indulging that love of the world which is the root of all evil, *fall into temptation and a ſnare, and many fooliſh and hurtful luſts*. Our Savior inſtructs us to pray, not for abundance, but for *our daily bread*. The prayer of Agur was, that God would *feed him with food convenient for him*. Similar to this was the prayer of the patriarch, that God would *give him food to eat, and raiment to put on*.— In oppoſition to worldly anxiety and carefulneſs, the goſpel requires us to ſeek firſt the kingdom of

God, leaving it with our heavenly Father to give us other things as he ſees to be needful.

From hence it appears that men ſtand chargeable in the eye of heaven, with the ſin of covetouſneſs, not only when they practiſe unjuſt and diſhoneſt means to accompliſh their worldly ends, but when they indulge ſuch eager and inſatiable deſires of riches, as make them diſcontented with their condition, and envious of the ſuperior condition of others—ſuch deſires as divert them from the care of their ſouls, and extinguiſh a ſenſe of futurity—ſuch deſires as urge them to a reſtleſs purſuit of riches, and fill them with tormenting and diſtruſtful cares for the ſupplies of life—ſuch deſires as render them incapable of enjoying what they poſſeſs, and make them unfeeling to the neceſſities of others.

The nature of covetouſneſs our Savior illuſtrates in the parable of a rich man, whoſe fields brought forth plentifully, and who thereupon reſolved to enlarge his ſtorehouſes, and, having laid up goods for many years, to ſpend the reſidue of his days in mirth and pleaſure.

The parable charges him with no injuſtice, fraud or oppreſſion, with no indirect meaſures to increaſe or preſerve his ſubſtance; but only with a heart devoted to the world, and dead to religion. He laid up treaſure for himſelf, and was not rich toward God.

III. The other ſin mentioned in our text, is *fooliſh talking* and *jeſting*.

It is not every kind of *jeſting*, which is to be denominated fooliſh talking, or pronounced ſinful.

The goſpel is not ſo rigid and auſtere as to debar us from innocent pleaſures, and harmleſs amuſements. Whatever may contribute to the improvement of happineſs, and is not productive of evil to ourſelves or others, is not only innocent, but really good. Providence, merely for our



pleaſure and enjoyment, beſtows many delicacies, which are not immediately neceſſary to the ſupport of life; ſo religion tolerates, for the amuſement of the mind, ſome diverſions which have no immediate connexion with our ſalvation. If it is innocent to refreſh the body by a ſocial walk, it is as innocent to exhilerare the mind by humorous diſcourſe. If vocal or inſtrumental muſic abſtract from ſentiment, and merely as an entertainment, is not inconſiſtent with piety; no more is a little wit and gaiety among friends in their free and ſocial viſits. There is a time to laugh, as well as a time to weep. Cheerful converſation is often of real uſe to enliven the drooping ſpirits and diſpel gloomy cares, to endear ſociety, and ſweeten the pleaſures of friendſhip.

Jeſting is not fooliſh, or inconvenient, when it is made uſe of to expoſe the abſurdity of error, and the folly of vice. There are ſome errors too groſs for ſerious argumentation, and there are ſome minds too callous to feel the force of grace and pointed reaſoning. In ſuch caſes wit and ridicule are ſometimes applied with ſucceſs.

Can you imagine any thing more ludicrous and ſatyrical than Elijah's advice to the beſotted prieſts of Baal? He mocked them and ſaid, "Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is purſuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he ſleepeth and muſt be awaked." The ſtyle of the ancient prophets is remarkable for its gravity and ſolemnity; and yet in no author do we meet with a finer and keener piece of raillery, than in the book of Iſaiah. Repreſenting the ridiculous folly of the worſhipper of carved images, he ſays, "He planteth an aſh, and the rain doth nouriſh it; he burneth part of it in the fire, and with part of it he eateth meat; he baketh bread, he roaſteth fleſh and is ſatisfied; he warmeth himſelf, and ſaith, ah I am warm, I have ſeen the fire. And

the reſidue thereof he maketh a God, even his graven image. He falleth down to it and worſhippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and ſaith, Deliver me for thou art my God."

Sarcaſtic wit is not, however, a weapon ordinarily to be uſed by preachers, though ſometimes uſed by the prophets. Few men have judgment to point it properly, or ſkill to manage it ſucceſsfully. In awkward hands it may wound truth, and leave error to eſcape unhurt.

Since there are caſes, in which wit and humor may be innocent, and even uſeful, it will be aſked, What is that *jeſting* which the Apoſtle condemns?

As jeſting ſtands here connected with *filthineſs* and *fooliſh talking*, we may ſuppoſe he particularly intends *lewd* and *obſcene* jeſting; or what he before calls corrupt communication, ſuch as tends to inflame the luſts of the profligate, to debauch the minds of the ſimple, and to wound the ears of the modeſt. Lewd converſation and obſcene writings are always criminal and dangerous; but moſt ſo, when they are recommended by the faſcinating charms of a lively wit and humorous imagination.

Profane jeſting is alſo condemned. If we may ſometimes indulge a ſportive fancy in our friendly converſation, yet we may never trifle with ſacred things, make a mock of ſin, employ the word of God as the ſubject of humor and drollery, and turn the awful doctrines of religion into merriment and ridicule. Such jeſting proceeds from a vain and impious heart, and will increaſe unto more ungodlineſs.

Reviling and *defamatory* jeſting is unbecoming among Chriſtians. They are not to ſpeak evil one of another, nor indeed of any man, except when ſome ſerious occaſion requires it, and truth will juſtify it. Evil ſpeaking never wounds ſo deeply, nor infuſes in the wound ſuch fatal poiſon, as

when it is ſharpened by wit and urged home by ridicule. A clumſy dull expreſſion, however defamatory, is little regarded and ſoon forgotten. But wit gives edge to abuſe, and adds wings to ſcandal. The ſtory is remembered for the humor and repeated for the pleaſantry; repetition gives it credit and circulation; and a virtuous worthy man, only for a natural infirmity or innocent ſingularity, becomes an object of ridicule and contempt. But he who thus utters a ſlander is a fool; for though he may excite the laughter of the vain, he becomes the abhorrence of the wiſe; and while he holds up his neighbor as an object of deriſion, he expoſes himſelf to general hatred. The man who values himſelf on witty conceits and ſatyrical touches, makes no diſtinction of objects; and they who laugh at his jeſting today, may themſelves become the ſubjects of his humor tomorrow. He ſacrifices truth and friendſhip to his predominant paſſion, and thus alienates his friends, and renders all men his enemies.

Having conſidered the nature of the ſeveral vices which the Apoſtle warns Chriſtians to avoid, we will, ſecondly, attend to the arguments ſubjoined.

1. The Apoſtle tells us, that impurity, covetouſneſs and fooliſh talking are *unbecoming in ſaints.*

Chriſtians are called to be holy, to imitate the character of God, and to be conformed to the image of his Son, to walk under the influence of the holy Spirit, and to prepare for a world wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs, and into which nothing enters that defiles. They who are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh. They who walk in the Spirit, will not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh. They who are delivered from this evil world, ſeek the things which are above, and place their affections there. They mortify their members which are on the earth, uncleanneſs, inordinate affection, evil concupiſ-

cence and covetouſneſs. If Heathens walk in the luſts of uncleanneſs, and according to the courſe of the world, yet a different converſation may be expected from Chriſtians, who have been taught the true character of God, have known the truth as it is in Jeſus, and have ſeen the heavenly world diſplayed before them. "Ye were ſometime darkneſs," ſays the Apoſtle, "but now light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

2, Fooliſh talking and jeſting *are not convenient*, as the Heathens imagined them to be, but are criminal in their nature, and fatal in their tendency.

This Apoſtle ſays to the converted Romans, "What fruit had ye then in thoſe things, whereof ye are now aſhamed? For the end of thoſe things is death." This vain talking is contrary to the deſign of ſpeech, which is to glorify God, and to edify and comfort one another. Therefore the Apoſtle adds, *Rather give thanks.* A man addicted to vain language, diſſipates a ſenſe of piety, and extinguiſhes a ſpirit of gratitude and devotion. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth ſpeaketh. In a heart filled with vain and trifling thoughts, there is no room for pure and ſpiritual ſentiments and affections: From ſuch a heart will proceed evil ſpeakings; and till the heart is purified, vain words will have no end.

Such talk is hurtful to the hearers. It wounds the feelings of the virtuous, and awakens the corrupt diſpoſitions of the vicious. It often provokes anger, brings on contention, corrupts good manners, ſeparates near friends, and, in ſhort, leads to every evil work. It is ſound ſpeech, ſpeech ſeaſoned with wiſdom, that miniſters grace to the hearers. "The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for want of wiſdom."

3. The Epheſian Chriſtians are warned, that the indulgence of theſe ſins is inconſiſtent with a title

to heaven. Whatever they might think in the time of their ignorance; yet now, ſays the Apoſtle, "Ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean perſon, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Chriſt and of God."

However imperfect our ideas of the heavenly ſtate may be, one thing is exceedingly plain, that it is a ſtate of holineſs, and that our happineſs there muſt chiefly conſiſt in holy diſpoſitions and exerciſes; hence we may certainly conclude, that no man can enter into it without a previous preparation by the renewal and ſanctification of his mind. It is the conſtant language of the goſpel, that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. To theſe Epheſians, who had been taught the truth as it is in Jeſus, the Apoſtle ſays, this ye know, that no unclean perſon has any inheritance in that ſpiritual kingdom." And to the Corinthians he ſays, "Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor covetous ſhall inherit this kingdom."

4. The Apoſtle tells them, that theſe ſins, not only exclude them from heaven, but bring upon them *the wrath of God*. "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God on the children of diſobedience."

Evil men often act as ſeducers; they practiſe every art of deception and enticement, to draw others into a partnerſhip with them in wickedneſs. They call evil good, and good evil; they put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs. To hide from the eyes of the ſimple the ſhamefulneſs and deformity of vice, they ſpread over it fair and tempting colors; and that the incautious may miſtake the nature of moral good and evil, they confound them by falſe and fictitious names. Strict virtue they

deride as ſuperſtition; and humble devotion they ſtigmatize as hypocriſy: They applaud licentiouſneſs as manly freedom; and commend the boldneſs of impiety as indicating a greatneſs of ſoul.

But let men ſay what they pleaſe, ſtill there is an eſſential difference between virtue and vice; and all arguments uſed to confound them, are but *vain words*; and with *theſe* let no man deceive you. Hearken to no enticements which would draw you away from the plain path of virtue; enter into no particular connexions with perſons of licentious principles and corrupt manners; chooſe for your companions them who fear God and keep his commandments. Steadily and invariably follow the plain precepts of the goſpel; and, whatever attempts may be made to explain away the meaning, or to relax the ſtrictneſs of them, ſtill remember, that by *theſe*, and not by the licentious opinions of men, you muſt finally be judged. If you miſtake them, it is at your peril; if you deſpiſe them you muſt take the conſequence. The goſpel has plainly denounced the wrath of God againſt uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs and fooliſh talking and jeſting. Be not deceived with vain words. The threatenings of God are words of truth and ſoberneſs. If you doubt the certain execution of them, yet he cannot deny himſelf; he is not a man that he ſhould lie, nor the ſon of man that he ſhould repent. If you doubt whether the precepts of the goſpel are to be underſtood in the extent, which the words ſeem to import, ſtill remember, they are the precepts of God. He trifles not with man, nor may man trifle with him. Take them as he has given them, and let your hearts be conformed to them, and your practice directed by them. Think not to plead in excuſe for your ſins, that you were deceived by the opinions of men. You are to call no man on earth your maſter. God is not mocked; whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he reap.

Eve was deceived by the ſerpent who flattered her, that tranſgreſſion would not be death. On this deception ſhe tranſgreſſed, and death enſued. She pleaded that the ſerpent *beguiled* her; but the plea was not admitted in bar of ſentence. The prophet, who diſobeyed the expreſs command of God, in compliance with the advice of another prophet, pretending an order from God to revoke the former command, periſhed in his preſumption. He was not to tranſgreſs an order given immediately to himſelf, on the inſinuation of another, that it was now ſuperceded. The command which he had received he knew to be from God; the information of the other prophet was only the word of man.

We are to take the ſcriptures as they are, and though one ſhould pretend to the inſpiration of the Spirit, and to immediate revelation from God, yet we are not to regard him in oppoſition to the plain and obvious ſenſe of the ſacred oracles. The Apoſtle ſays, "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other goſpel, than that which ye have received, let him be accurſed."

SERMON XXXV.

EPHESIANS v. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For ye were ſometimes darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord: Walk as children of light, (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs and truth) proving what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs, but rather reprove them. For it is a ſhame to ſpeak of thoſe things, which are done of them in ſecret.

THE ſeveral vices enumerated in the preceding verſes, are fornication, uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs, filthineſs, fooliſh talking, and profane and wanton jeſting. Theſe were practiſed among the Heathens in their dark and ignorant ſtate.—— The Apoſtle warns the Epheſians, now enlightened by the goſpel, that they no longer have fellowſhip with their neighbors in theſe unfruitful and pernicious works—that they avoid not only the direct commiſſion of, but all partnerſhip in theſe and all other ſins, which the goſpel has detected and condemned. We will,

I. Illuſtrate this fellowſhip in wickedneſs. And,

II. Apply the arguments, which the Apoſtle, in the words now read, urges againſt it.

1. We will illuſtrate this fellowſhip in wickedneſs, which chriſtians are exhorted to avoid.

If by any means we cooperate with ſinners, countenance them in their evil works, ſtrengthen their hands, hinder their repentance and reformation;—if we neglect to reſtrain them, when it is in our power, or to rebuke them when we have opportunity; or if we take a ſecret pleaſure in their ſins, even though we do nothing directly to encourage them, we have fellowſhip with them.

1. Not to oppoſe, in many caſes, is to embolden tranſgreſſors, and to be partakers with them.

Rulers are to be a terror unto evil works. The nobles of Judah are ſaid to have profaned the ſabbath, when they ſuffered the men of Tyre to come into the city, and ſell wares on the ſabbath day.—The miniſters of religion are charged to bear public teſtimony againſt prevailing error and vice, and to rebuke, before all men, ſuch as walk contrary to the goſpel, that they may not be partakers of other men's ſins, but may keep themſelves pure.—If theſe watchmen ſpeak not to warn the wicked of his evil way, that he may ſave his ſoul, the ſame wicked man will die in his iniquity; but his blood will be required at their hands. The parent is commanded to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If they make themſelves vile, and he reſtrains them not, he is a partaker with them in their guilt, and God will judge his houſe.

2. We have more direct fellowſhip with the wicked, when we encourage them by our example.

We are to provide things honeſt and commendable in the ſight of all men, that they by our good converſation may be gained over to the intereſt of virtue. The ill example of men in a diſtinguiſhed ſtation gives a ſort of ſanction to vice. Few are ſo obſcure in life, but that they may find ſome who are ſubject to their influence. The parent, the

maſter of a family, the aged chriſtian, the profeſſor of religion may within his circle do much to prejudice, and much to promote the cauſe of religion. It concerns every man, in regard to others as well as to himſelf, to be careful what manner of perſon he is. If we practice iniquity under any circumſtances, we muſt bear the burden of our own guilt; but if by an open example of vice we corrupt others, our burden will be accumulated by a participation of their guilt. Yea, ſuch a tender concern ought we to feel for the virtue of thoſe around us, as to forbear in their preſence thoſe innocent liberties, which might encourage them to real tranſgreſſion. "Take heed," ſays the Apoſtle, "leſt by any means your liberty become a ſtumbling block to them that are weak. For if a man ſee thee, who haſt knowledge, ſit at meat in the idol's temple, ſhall not the conſcience of him that is weak, be emboldened to eat things, which are offered to idols?"

3. They who provoke and incite others to evil works, have fellowſhip with them.

This may be done by the propagation of licentious opinions, which confound the difference between virtue and vice. It was a horrible thing in the prophets of Jeruſalem, that they walked in lies, cauſed the people to err, and ſtrengthened the hands of evil doers, that none did return from his wickedneſs. Elymas the ſorcerer is called an enemy of all righteouſneſs, becauſe he perverted the right ways of the Lord, and ſought to turn away others from the faith. They who are led away with the errors of the wicked, muſt bear their guilt. And they who diffuſe the errors, muſt anſwer for the conſequences. Both are bringing on themſelves ſwift deſtruction.

This may alſo be effected by direct perſuaſions and enticements. The wiſe man, aware of the dangers to which youth in a licentious age are expoſ-

ed, gives this ſalutary caution; "When ſinners entice you, conſent ye not."—"Enter not into the path of the wicked, nor go in the way of evil men; for they ſleep not except they have done miſchief; and their ſleep is taken away except they cauſe ſome to fall." It was the moſt infamous part of Jeroboam's character, that by erecting his golden calves, and recommending the worſhip of them, he made Iſrael to ſin. The prophet denounces the curſe of God againſt the man, who giveth his neighbor drink, and by putting the bottle to him maketh him drunken.

To ſuggeſt the means of executing a wicked deſign is to make ourſelves accomplices in it. Balaam, though he was reſtrained from curſing Iſrael, yet taught Balak to caſt a ſtumbling block before them, and draw them into idolatry, which, he knew, would bring down upon them the curſe of God.—Balaam therefore periſhed among thoſe who committed this treſpaſs againſt the Lord.

The inſtigators of evil are involved in a common guilt with the immediate actors. Paul calls himſelf a *blaſphemer*, becauſe he puniſhed the ſaints in every city and compelled *them* to blaſpheme.

There are ſome, who plead in defence of particular vices, deride a godly life, and treat the ſolemn truths of the goſpel with an air of contempt. Theſe, by their inſolent mockery, deſtroy much good, and add ſtrength to the cauſe of infidelity and vice.—The man, indeed, who can be laughed out of his religion, has never deeply felt the power of it in his heart. But theſe mockers will have a diſtinguiſhed ſhare in the puniſhment and perdition of ungodly men. Peculiar marks of God's diſpleaſure will be impreſſed on thoſe who corrupt the earth with their abominations.

4. They who explicitly conſent to, and actually join with ſinners in their evil works, have fellowſhip with them.

The Jews, who hired Judas to betray his Lord, and extorted from Pilate a ſentence of death againſt the Savior, are called his *betrayers* and *murderers*. —Saul, who ſtood by, and kept the raiment of the men who ſtoned Stephen, was conſenting to his death, and involved in the guilt of it. We are in any wiſe to rebuke our brother, and not ſuffer ſin upon him. If then, inſtead of bearing teſtimony againſt the ſins of others, we actually concur with them, we are partakers of their guilt; and it is a circumſtance of little importance, who were firſt in the tranſgreſſion. So afraid was David, leſt he ſhould help the ungodly, that he would not even countenance them by his preſence. He ſays, "I have not ſat with vain perſons, nor gone with diſſemblers: I hate the congregation of evil doers: I will not ſit with the wicked." Reſolving to keep the commandments of his God, he ſaid to evil doers, "Depart from me."

5. To comfort and uphold ſinners in their wickedneſs is to have fellowſhip with them.

God commands, that a mark of approbation be ſet on the men who ſigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. David beheld the tranſgreſſors and was grieved. The Apoſtle reprehends the church in Corinth, that ſhe had not mourned for the groſs iniquity committed by one of her members. He teaches the Theſſalonians, that if any profeſſor of religion walk diſorderly among them, they are to note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed. If then we have pleaſure in them who do evil, make them our intimate companions, ſeek their ſociety, and appear to take ſatisfaction in their frothy and vain converſation, and ludicrous treatment of ſerious things, we are partakers with them.

6. There are ſome who rejoice in iniquity, when they have lent no hand to accompliſh it.

It is no uncommon thing for men to rejoice in the iniquity of an enemy—of one who is their competitor in buſineſs, trade or preferment—of one who belongs to another ſect in religion, or party in politics. Have you never obſerved, with what apparent pleaſure ſome will receive and ſpread reports, to the diſadvantage of one, againſt whom, on ſome ſuch account they have entertained a prejudice? How they love to dwell on the infamous ſtory? How uneaſy they appear, if you queſtion the truth of it? Are they not inwardly glad at the opportunity of caſting reproach on the man who ſtands in their way? How many are there, who in a way of ſport and merriment ſpeak of other mens' faults, and delight to make them the ſubject of laughter and diverſion? Do not theſe rejoice in iniquity? Bring the queſtion nearer home: Have you never perceived an inward pleaſure, when the man, whom you hated, has by ſome groſs miſconduct expoſed himſelf to infamy? Have you not enjoyed his iniquity as gain to yourſelf? Have you never been ſenſibly gratified in hearing the faults of others talked over and ſpread around, though perhaps you was not the author or propagator of the ſcandal? Now, by thus rejoicing in iniquity you make yourſelf a partaker of it. By your ſatisfaction in other mens ſins, you aſſume a ſhare in the guilt of them.

We have illuſtrated the nature of fellowſhip in ſin. We proceed,

II. To apply the arguments which the Apoſtle urges againſt it.

1. One argument is taken from the *ſuperior light*, which chriſtians enjoy. "Be not partakers with the children of diſobedience; for ye were ſometimes darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord. Walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable to the Lord."

Heathens are in a ſtate of darkneſs, and they practiſe the works of darkneſs. You are by the goſpel brought into a ſtate of light. You have been taught the different nature and conſequences of ſin and holineſs. Will you ſtill walk, as the Heathens walk, in the vanity of their mind? Will you have fellowſhip with them? What communion hath light with darkneſs? What part hath the believer with an infidel? Whatever excuſes may be made for the ſins of Heathens, theſe cannot be pleaded in your favor. You have known your Lord's will, and if you do it not, you will be beaten with many ſtripes. Think what a privilege you enjoy in your diſtinction from the unenlightened world. Why has God made you to differ? Has his goodneſs laid you under no obligation? Will you ſtill walk, as if you remained in darkneſs?—Will you ſtill promote the intereſt of the kingdom of darkneſs? Will you do nothing to reſcue your fellow mortals from that deplorable ſtate, in which you ſee them lying; but, on the contrary, endeavor to fix them there by your fellowſhip with them? Who would expect this from you? Have no more fellowſhip with them, but rather reprove them.—This argument the Apoſtle Peter preſſes on Chriſtians with great force. "Ye are a choſen generation, a peculiar people, that ye ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes of him who has called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light.—Dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as ſtrangers and pilgrims, that ye abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul; having your converſation, honeſt among the Gentiles, that they, by your good works which they behold, may glorify God in the day of viſitation.

2. Another argument againſt this fellowſhip with ſinners, is taken from the *grace* of the *Holy Spirit*, of which believers are the ſubjects. "Be not partakers with them, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs and truth."

The goſpel is a miniſtration of the Spirit. As it came to men attended with the demonſtration of the Spirit in ſigns and wonders, ſo it was at firſt; and is ſtill accompanied with his kind and gracious influence on the hearts of men, for the awakening and conviction of ſinners, and for the ſanctification and comfort of believers. All true believers have the fellowſhip of the Spirit. They are partakers of his renewing and transforming power. The fruit of the Spirit is oppoſite to the works of darkneſs: It is in all goodneſs, and righteouſneſs and truth. And what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? They who walk in the Spirit will not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh. This Spirit can have no fellowſhip with that which works in the children of diſobedience; for the deſign, operation and fruit of theſe two Spirits are oppoſite to each other. If then we profeſs to have been renewed in our minds, and to be ſtill governed in our lives by the Spirit of God, let us have no communion with ſinners in their unfruitful works, but rather reprove them. Let us ſupport our character by works of a different kind—by thoſe works of holineſs, which are the true and genuine fruits of the Spirit of God.

3. The Apoſtle teaches us, that the works of darkneſs are *unfruitful*.

Gain is the object of all worldly partnerſhips.—If you knew a number of men, who had combined in the proſecution of a buſineſs, from which no profit could poſſibly accrue, but its obvious tendency was to poverty, ſlavery and death, would you think of joining them? Would you not be aſtoniſhed at their ſtrange infatuation? Have no fellowſhip then in the works of wickedneſs, for in this nothing is gained, but every thing loſt. Paul demands of the Roman converts, "What fruit had ye then in thoſe things, whereof ye are now aſhamed? For the end of thoſe things is death."

Though you had no higher aim, than worldly peace, prosperity and enjoyment, it would be your wisdom to adhere with invariable constancy to the rules of sobriety, justice, truth and goodness.—— "Godliness has the promise of the life which now is." This will prevent ruinous habits, will give tranquility and contentment to the mind, will procure favor and good understanding with men, and bring down the blessings of divine providence; in a word, it is profitable to all things. The reverse are the consequences of vice and impiety. "Righteousness tendeth to life, but he who pursueth evil, pursueth it to his death." You may indeed see men of piety in a state of sickness, poverty and affliction. But did their piety bring them into this state? Would ungodliness have secured them against it? Or will it now deliver them from it? There is not a virtue, in the whole system of practical religion, which will injure a man in his health, reputation or substance. And there is not a vice, which can be practised with safety. Will you then have fellowship in wickedness? You act contrary to all those rules of prudence, which govern you in other partnerships. Your commerce is not only unprofitable but ruinous.

4. This is a *shameful* fellowship.

The Apostle says, "It is a shame even to speak of those things, which are done by them in secret?" He alludes probably to those abominable excesses and impurities, practised by the Heathens, in the nocturnal festivals which they celebrated in honor of their deities. These were such as decency forbad him to name.

Sin is in itself a shameful thing. It is an opposition to the character and will of the Creator—a rebellion against his authority and government—a contradiction to the end and design of our existence—a degradation of our nature, a perversion of our powers, and an extinction of our liberty. It de-

ſtroys all that is noble and excellent in the man, defaces the divine image in his ſoul, and ſinks him to a level with brutal nature.

Partnerſhip in evil works brings us into diſhonorable connexions—into connexion with the children of diſobedience, the enemies of God and men; and into connexion with that evil ſpirit who works in the children of diſobedience. When we cooperate with ſinners, we take up the trade of that accurſed being who was baniſhed from heaven; we enter into fellowſhip with him, who goes about ſeeking whom he may deſtroy. The Apoſtle ſays, "I would not that ye ſhould have fellowſhip with devils."

Partnerſhip in iniquity is ſhameful, as it betrays a raſh and fooliſh confidence; a confidence in thoſe who are not to be truſted. Wicked men may ſolicit your concurrence with them in their evil deſigns; but they will deſert you in the day of trouble. They may employ you as a tool to accompliſh their purpoſe; but will not conſole you in the anguiſh of guilt, nor deliver you from the puniſhment of your wickedneſs.

The rulers of the Jews covenanted with Judas to betray his maſter into their hands. But when, filled with the horror of remorſe, he threw back the wages of his perfidy, and confeſſed, "I have ſinned in betraying innocent blood," they inſenſible to his diſtreſs, replied, "What is that to us? See *thou* to that."

5. If we have fellowſhip with ſinners in their works, we muſt ſhare with them in their puniſhment.

The Apoſtle ſays, "The wrath of God cometh on the children of diſobedience. Be not ye partakers with them."

The like warning God gives to his people at the approaching deſtruction of Babylon; "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her

ſins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Solomon obſerves, that "a companion of fools will be deſtroyed.—Though hand join in hand, the wicked ſhall not be unpuniſhed." All who are concerned in the work of iniquity, muſt divide among them the fatal reward—a reward not diminiſhed, but often augmented by their mutual concurrence with, and reciprocal influence upon each other. If we would ſtand clear of the guilt, we muſt abſtain from the appearance of evil.

It becomes you now to review the various ways in which men form a fellowſhip in ſin, and to examine whether you are concerned in ſuch a vain, ſuch a ruinous commerce. Have you never by example, enticement, countenance or concurrence, drawn others into iniquity? Have you never taken pleaſure in them who do evil? Have you rather reproved and reſtrained them? If any ſuch partnerſhip has ſubſiſted, it is high time that you diſſolve it—that you withdraw yourſelves and reclaim your aſſociates from ſo fatal a confederacy. If you have deſtroyed much good, it concerns you, by all means in your power, to reſtore it. Perhaps you cannot undo all the evil which you have done, nor recal the virtue which you have expelled. But, at leaſt, by repentance ſave your own ſouls; and, by your good converſation, encourage the repentance of others.

Let all be perſuaded to a different kind of fellowſhip, a fellowſhip in the fruitful works of holineſs and light. Conſider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Exhort one another daily, leſt any be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. Take heed leſt any man fail of the grace of God; leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Give diligence to reclaim the wicked and encourage the virtuous. He who converteth a ſinner from the error of his ways, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death and hide the multitude of ſins.

SERMON XXXVI.

EPHESIANS v. 13, 14.

But all things that are reproved are made manifeſt by the light; for whatſoever doth make manifeſt is light. Wherefore he ſaith, Awake thou that ſleepeſt and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light.

THE words, to which the Apoſtle here alludes, are in the beginning of the ſixteenth chapter of Iſaiah. "Ariſe ſhine," or be enlightened, "for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon thee. For behold, the darkneſs ſhall cover the earth, and groſs darkneſs the people; but the Lord ſhall ariſe upon thee, and his glory ſhall be ſeen upon thee." To the Gentiles the Apoſtle applies theſe words, as a call to awake from their ſlumbers, and enjoy the light of the goſpel newly riſen upon them.

This call addreſſed to the Epheſians may with equal propriety be addreſſed to multitudes in the Chriſtian world; for though the light ſhines, they open not their eyes, but continue in the ſame dead ſleep as if darkneſs ſtill covered them.

Sleep and death are metaphors often uſed in ſcripture, to expreſs the moral ſtate, not only of Heathens, but alſo of ſinners in general; and eſ-

pecially of ſuch as are ſecure and thoughtleſs in their ſins. To ſuch ſlumbering ſouls I ſhall now apply the call in the text: And I beg that you will watch one hour.

I ſhall deſcribe the *character* of the perſons to whom the call is directed—open the *call* itſelf, and preſs the argument in the text.

I. Let us attend to the character of the perſons here addreſſed: They are ſuch as are in a ſtate of *ſleep*.

In vain is the call in the text addreſſed to you, unleſs you are convinced, that you are the men. The moſt exact deſcription of your character, unleſs you hear and apply it, will give you no conviction. If you can ſit inattentive to a ſubject in which you are ſo nearly concerned, it is manifeſt, that you are under a Spirit of ſlumber, and, with reſpect to you, the inquiry may ſtop here. But let me hope better things of you, though I thus ſpeak. To proceed then,

1. If you allow yourſelves in the practice of *known wickedneſs*, your conſcience is aſleep.

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs." If you had any juſt apprehenſion of this wrath, you would not take pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs: You would be anxious for deliverance from it. While therefore you indulge iniquity in your heart, you are in a ſtate of ſleep; your conſcience is unfeeling to guilt, your reaſon is blind to intereſt, and your ſoul is dead to a ſenſe of danger.

Think not that your condition is ſafe, becauſe there are *ſome* vices which you avoid." Know we not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God?" If you are ſuch, in any reſpect, you muſt be renewed and ſanctified by the Spirit of God.

You ſay, "*Good* men are imperfect—they offend in many things." This is true; but they purſue not a *courſe* of ſin; they yield not themſelves *ſervants* to it; they *obey* it not in the luſts thereof. When through infirmity or temptation they are led aſtray, they think on their ways, and turn their feet into God's teſtimonies. A conviction of their tranſgreſſions brings them on their knees before God, and their pious ſorrow works in them carefulneſs. Is this your character?—There is then ground of hope and comfort. But if, on the contrary, in your general reſolutions, you make reſerves in favor of this or that ſin—if you deliberately contrive the commiſſion of iniquity—if you repeat it often without remorſe, and run into temptations without caution—if when you have done evil you ſeek excuſes to pacify your conſcience—if the imperfections of good men, inſtead of exciting you to vigilance, encourage you to ſelf-flattery—if the mercy of God, which ſhould lead you to repentance, emboldens you to continue in ſin—what will you ſay?—Do you not love and chooſe wickedneſs?

Is not your heart ſet in you to do evil?

2. If you live in the cuſtomary neglect of *ſelf-examination*, you are in a ſtate of ſlumber.

One who is awake to religion, regards it as the one thing needful. He is ſolicitous to know, whether he poſſeſſes the temper, and is entitled to the bleſſings of it. He examines himſelf, whether he is in the faith, and proves his works whether they are wrought in God. That ſenſe of the importance of religion which engages him in the practice of it, makes him attentive to the exerciſes of his heart and the actions of his life, that he may know what manner of man he is. This is his prayer, "Search me, O God, and try my heart; prove me and know my thoughts: See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way ev-

erlaſting." Inquire then, whether, under a ſerious concern to know your ſtate, you are converſant with your own hearts—whether you often bring them to the law and to the teſtimony, and try them by the rules which you find there.

But here, I would obſerve to you; though the entire neglect of ſelfexamination proves you to be in a ſtate of ſin, it is not every kind of ſelfexamination, that will prove the contrary. Sinners, who are uſually aſleep, may at times rouſe up, and ſpend a few thoughts on their dangerous ſtate, and then ſink back into their ſlumbers. Yea, there is ſuch a thing as making ſelfexamination a mean of ſelfdeception. If you attend only to thoſe things which ſeem favorable, and overlook every thing of a contrary aſpect—if you dwell upon the good actions you have done, and ſpread them as a cloak over your iniquities—if you regard only your external conduct, and never explore the motives by which you have been governed—if you compare yourſelves with others, and conclude that all is well, becauſe you ſee in them certain vices, which you have not practiſed; you are but like the Phariſee, who truſted in himſelf, that he was righteous, becauſe he was not as other men were, extortioners, unjuſt and adulterers; and yet never conſidered the pride, uncharitableneſs and arrogance, which were in his heart. Your aim, in ſuch a kind of examination, is only to perſuade yourſelves, that your ſtate is good; not to know whether it really is ſo. This examination will terminate in ſtronger deluſion.

3. If you have never been, in any degree, affected with a ſenſe of your guilt, and of your dependence on the mercy of God in Chriſt, you are among thoſe who are aſleep.

The goſpel ſuppoſes men to be ſinners, and as ſuch to need the ſalvation which it brings. It is abſurd to offer pardon to the guiltleſs, and vain to

offer it to thoſe who think themſelves ſo. Chriſt came, not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance—not to ſave thoſe who are out of danger, but to ſeek them who are loſt. In order to repentance, you muſt be convinced, that you are ſinners. In order to your accepting ſalvation from Chriſt, you muſt ſee yourſelves to be loſt. Nothing can be more manifeſt, on the leaſt reflection, than that, by violating God's holy law, we have fallen into condemnation, from which we cannot deliver ourſelves. An inſenſibility of this ſtate is an evidence of a ſpirit of ſlumber.

The juſt live by faith in the Son of God. This faith is ſomething more than a ſpeculative belief, that the Son of God is the Savior of men. As much as this the devils believe. It is ſuch a humbling view of our guilt, and ſuch a ſenſible perſuaſion of his authority, grace and ſufficiency to ſave the guilty, as brings the ſoul to ſubmit to him in all his characters. Conviction of ſin muſt precede faith in Chriſt. The law, which gives the knowledge of our guilt, is a ſchoolmaſter to bring us to Chriſt, that we may be juſtified by faith. Paul was alive without the law; but when the commandment came home to his conſcience, ſin revived in his apprehenſion, and he ſaw himſelf to be dead. Then he complained, O wretched man that I am! Then he inquired, who ſhall deliver me from this death? And then he gave thanks to God, that there was deliverance through Jeſus Chriſt the Lord.

Here, my friends, renew the inquiry—What report does your conſcience make on the queſtion under conſideration?—Can you ſay, that, under a deep conviction of your pollution and guilt, you have earneſtly deſired, diligently ſought, and humbly accepted the deliverance offered in the goſpel? Or muſt you confeſs, that you have lived ſtrangers to this conviction?

Think it not ſufficient, that on the authority of ſcripture, which pronounces all men ſinners, you are free to acknowledge *yourſelves* ſuch. If this is all your conviction, it is no more to your purpoſe, than your acknowledgment, that the *Turks* or *Algerines* are ſinners. The conviction muſt not hover around at a diſtance; it muſt ſettle upon yourſelves. You muſt ſee *your own* ſinfulneſs, *your own* deſert of God's wrath—*your own* dependence on the great Savior of ſinners. If you have had no ſuch view of yourſelves, you are yet concerned in the call, *Awake thou that ſleepeſt and ariſe from the dead.*

4. If you have no conflicts with ſin and temptation, you are in a ſtate of ſlumber.

The Chriſtian life is a warfare, not only with fleſh and blood, but alſo with principalities and powers, wicked Spirits, and the rulers of the darkneſs of this world. The remains of ſin, the motions of the fleſh, the objects of the world, the examples of ſinners, and the temptations of Satan, oppoſe the Chriſtian in his heavenly courſe. If he would proceed with conſtancy, he muſt wreſtle with all theſe. From this warfare nothing can free us, but abſolute victory, or total ſubjection. The Chriſtian, in this ſtate of imperfection, never gains ſuch an entire conqueſt over his enemies, as to ſpoil them of all their power. Though he is delivered from their dominion, he is not freed from their moleſtation.

If then you know not what it means to reſiſt temptations, to ſtrive againſt corruptions, to deny yourſelves to crucify the fleſh; you are led captive by your enemies at their will.

You may, indeed, have ſome inward ſtruggles with ſin, when you are not delivered from its dominion. An alarming providence, the forebodings of conſcience, a ſenſe of ſhame, a regard to intereſt, may, at times, excite you to ſome oppoſition againſt



particular ſins, when there is no principle of holineſs in your hearts. But then, if there are no conflicts of this kind, you are in bondage to iniquity. Sin has full, uncontroled dominion over you.

5. The prevalence of a ſenſual and carnal diſpoſition is a ſign of ſpiritual death.

They who have riſen with Chriſt to a ſpiritual life, have ſet their affections on things above; their converſation is in heaven; they walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit; they are laying up treaſure in heaven, and their hearts are with their treaſure. If you are ſtrangers to ſuch a life as this; if the glory of heaven has never appeared to you in ſuch a light, as to make you deſpiſe and forego every thing which comes in competition with it; if you are carrying on a ſcheme for this world only, and not for the future; if you have no delight in the exerciſes of religion, nor deſire of God's favor; if you can live contented without the preſent tokens of his love, and without the hope of a future admiſſion to the preſence of his glory; you are under the influence of ſpiritual ſlumber—you are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.

6. Stupidity under the warnings of God's word and providence, indicates ſuch a ſtate of ſoul, as the ſcripture compares to ſleep.

The Chriſtian, renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, has a quick and lively ſenſe of divine things—he has a heart which is tender, apt to be impreſſed with the concerns of religion, open to conviction of and ſuſceptible of relentings for ſin. When he is warned of God, he is moved with fear. He is afraid of God's judgments and trembles at his word. This ſpiritual ſenſibility is an eſſential property of the new creature.

What is your temper? Is it the reverſe of this? Is your heart unfeeling to guilt and danger? Is it impenetrable to the ſword of the Spirit? Can you hear the impenitent ſinner deſcribed by characters,

which directly apply to you, and yet not be affected with your awful ſtate? Can you hear the warnings of God's word and providence proclaimed, and yet feel no ſolicitude; but ſtill flatter yourſelves that you ſhall have peace?—You are as one that lieth down in the midſt of the ſea, or that ſleepeth on the top of the maſt.

7. The ſoul, in which the temper of the goſpel is formed, hungers and thirſts after righteouſneſs, deſires ſpiritual growth, and reaches after perfection. How is it with you? Are you unacquainted with the aſpirations of the humble ſoul after holy and heavenly improvements? Are you contented with attainments which you ſuppoſe you have already made? Does your hope of heaven make you careleſs and negligent in duty? Do you reſt ſatisfied with ſuch a meaſure of goodneſs, as you imagine, may be ſufficient to ſave you from hell? If this is your ſpirit and temper, all your religion is vain, and all your hopes are deluſive.

The true Chriſtian loves God's word, becauſe he is thereby inſtructed, encouraged and quickened in his duty. He loves divine ordinances, becauſe he is thereby nouriſhed in faith and holineſs. As a new born babe he deſires this ſincere milk, that he may grow thereby. His holy deſires excite him to prayer. He maintains a daily communion with God. He comes to the throne of grace, that he may obtain grace to help in time of need. If then you live in a careleſs and cuſtomary neglect of theſe inſtituted means of religion, you are, undoubtedly, in that indolent ſtate of mind, which our text expreſſes by the metaphors of *ſleep* and *death*.

To you, then, I may, with great propriety; and God grant, I may with equal ſucceſs,

II. Open and apply the call in the text, *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead*.

1. This *awaking* muſt ſuppoſe and imply a conviction of your ſin, and a ſenſe of your danger.

Exhortations to repentance are addreſſed, without effect, to thoſe who know not that they are miſerable and wretched. When ſuch are urged to return unto God, their language is, Wherein ſhall we return?

Compare yourſelves with the law of God, that you may obtain the knowledge of ſin; bring home to yourſelves the threatenings of the law, that ſin may appear exceeding ſinful.

The call in the text is a warning of your danger. It is like that of the ſhipmaſter to Jonah, ſleeping in a ſtorm: "What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Ariſe, call upon thy God." It is like that of the prophet to the ſelfflattering ſinners in Judah: "Riſe up, ye that are at eaſe; hear my voice, ye careleſs ones; many days and years ſhall ye be troubled."

Conſider, I beſeech you, my friends, what a condition you are in. God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs. The puniſhment, which he will inflict on thoſe of your character, is great beyond conception. The ſcripture repreſents it by the moſt awful images and ſimilitudes. Whatever may be their particular import, they evidently ſignify, in general, that the puniſhment which awaits the ungodly will be perpetual and extreme. Though it will not be executed in full meaſure, until the final judgment, yet it will, undoubtedly, *begin* at the time of death. The rich man, when he died, lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments. This is not ſpoken by way of anticipation; for at this time, he had five brethren in his father's houſe, to whom he wiſhed a ſpecial warning might be ſent, leſt they ſhould come to that place of torment. You are, therefore, now expoſed to this puniſhment. It is only the precarious breath of your noſtrils, which ſuſpends it.

Your danger is much increaſed by your careleſſneſs, becauſe this renders your repentance more doubtful. While your careleſſneſs continues, your danger is daily growing greater; for you are adding ſin to ſin; you are abuſing the mercy and patience of God; you are hardening your heart more and more; you are ſinking from ſlumber to ſleep, from ſleep to death, in your treſpaſſes and ſins. It is therefore high time to awake; for while you ſay, peace and ſafety, deſtruction is coming upon you; and "your iniquity ſhall be to you as a breach ready to fall, ſwelling out in a high wall, whoſe breaking cometh ſuddenly in an inſtant."

2. This awaking from ſleep, and ariſing from the dead, implies a real *repentance* of ſin, and *turning* to God.

"Awake to righteouſneſs," ſays the Apoſtle, "and ſin not." "The night is far ſpent, the day is at hand; it is high time to awake out of ſleep. Let us therefore put off the works of darkneſs, and put on the armor of light."—"Put on the breaſtplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of ſalvation." Ariſe and come forth, dreſſed in robes, and equipped with armor ſuitable for the buſineſs and dangers of the day. The import of the metaphor here uſed, is more literally expreſſed by your being renewed in the Spirit of your mind, and putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man which is created after the image of God. Think not then, that you have complied with this call, until your hearts are changed from the habitual love of ſin, to the love of univerſal holineſs; and conclude not, that you are the ſubjects of this change, until you experience the abiding fruits of it in your tempers and lives. This leads me to ſay,

3. They, who have awoke from their ſleep and riſen from the dead, will experience the properties,

and maintain the exerciſes of a holy and ſpiritual life.

They will be *heavenly minded.* Being riſen with Chriſt, they will ſet their affection on things above, for Chriſt is there, and their intereſt is there.

They will be *watchful* againſt ſin and temptation. They will no more have fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of darkneſs; but rather reprove them. They will walk circumſpectly, and abſtain from the appearance of evil.

They will have a *tenderneſs* of conſcience; a heart of fleſh in oppoſition to the heart of ſtone. This will diſcover itſelf in a humble jealouſy of themſelves, in a careful inſpection of their tempers and lives, in a ready conviction of ſin, and eaſy relentings for it.

They will walk in *newneſs of life,* ſtudying what is acceptable in the ſight of God. They will no more yield themſelves to ſin, but will yield themſelves to God, as thoſe who are alive from the dead, and their members inſtruments of righteouſneſs to him.

They will delight *in prayer.* The ſoul born from above, looks upward, and tends to its native place. It was ſaid of Paul, after his converſion, "Behold, he prayeth." Paul had doubtleſs prayed before; for he was a Phariſee; and the Phariſees prayed long and often. But his Phariſeean prayers are not reckoned here. Now it is ſaid; "Behold, he prayeth." He prayed, as a man ought to do, from his heart. His ſoul quickened to a new life, felt new deſires, and made new requeſts.

They will aſpire after *improvements* in knowledge and holineſs, and delight in the means of ſpiritual growth. Babes in Chriſt long for the ſtature of perfect men.

You ſee then, what this riſing from the dead means. Let us now,

III. Attend to the *encouragement*, which the text contains. "Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and *Chriſt ſhall give thee light*"—ſhall ſhine upon and enlighten thee.

1. This may be underſtood as a promiſe of pardon and eternal life on your repentance.

"Repent and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out." However great and numerous they are, they may all be forgiven through the blood of your Redeemer. This cleanſes from all ſin." "The righteouſneſs of God through the faith of Chriſt is unto all who believe, and there is no difference." The greatneſs of your guilt is no obſtruction to God's pardoning mercy—it is only your impenitence which excludes you from the hopes of the goſpel. See, what light ariſes in darkneſs.

2. The words farther import God's gracious attention to awakened ſouls, when they frame their doings to turn to him.

The call is, *Awake, ariſe from the dead*—repair to the Savior. Say not, "We are unable to diſcern the way:" Chriſt will ſhine upon you and give you light. Say not, "We are unable to riſe and walk:" He will meet you with his grace. "Ariſe, he calleth you." He will guide your ſteps. Stretch out to him your withered hand; he will give it ſtrength. When the prodigal, having come to himſelf, felt his own wretched condition, and contemplated the rich ſupplies in his father's houſe—what did he ſay? Did he complain, "I cannot return?"—No: He reſolved, "I will ariſe and go to my father." "And while he was yet a great way off, the father ſaw him, had compaſſion on him and ran to meet him.

Do you aſk, "What can the dead do toward their own reſurrection?—To what purpoſe are the prayers and endeavors of ſinners for their own converſion?"—Theſe are queſtions of a ſoul at eaſe—

of a ſluggard who pleads, "A little more ſleep, a little more ſlumber, a little folding of the hands to ſleep." Your danger has been ſet before you. If you have been wholly inattentive, and are ſtill unawakened, I can only tell you again, your danger is exceeding great, and greater than before. The ſame ſtupidity, which has hindered your attention to this warning, will, I am afraid, defeat any advice which can be given you. But if, convinced of your guilt, and ſenſible of your danger, you ſeriouſly inquire, what you muſt do, you will gladly receive the word.

Acquaint yourſelves, then, with the nature of religion. Think on your ways, and compare them with the word of God. Read and hear this word with honeſt ſelfapplication. Avoid whatever might extinguiſh your preſent ſober ſentiments. Shun the occaſions of, and temptations to ſin. Daily implore God's quickening and ſanctifying grace, and in humble dependence on this grace form your reſolutions againſt ſin, and your purpoſes of new obedience.

Conſider your preſent awakening as a new call from God to turn to him and hope in his grace. To this grace you are indebted for the work begun in you. Receive it not in vain. However inſufficient you are to do any thing as of yourſelves, yet remember you are not left to yourſelves. By that grace which is now ſtriving with you, there is ſomething which you may do. "Work out your ſalvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you."

You ſee, on the one hand, how dangerous is your condition, while you continue in your ſins; and on the other, how great is your encouragement to repent and ſeek God's mercy. If you are ſtill unperſuaded—if neither a view of God's wrath makes you afraid, nor a view of his mercy animates your hope—if deſpiſing both the terrors of the law, and

the invitations of the goſpel, you go on ſtill in your treſpaſſes, what more ſhall be ſaid?—Know, my friends, it is high time to awake out of ſleep. Though you may ſleep in ſin, and delay your repentance, yet your judgment lingereth not, and your damnation ſlumbereth not; but you are bringing on yourſelves ſwift deſtruction. Therefore awake, ye who ſleep, and ariſe from the dead, for now Chriſt will give you light.





SERMON XXXVII.

EPHESIANS v. 15, 16, 17.

See then that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, ——— becauſe the days are evil. Wherefore be not unwiſe, but underſtanding what the will of the Lord is.

THESE Epheſians, who were ſometimes in darkneſs or Heathenism, had now by the preaching of the goſpel become light in the Lord. —The Apoſtle therefore exhorts them to walk as children of light—"not as fools, but as wiſe." To walk in wiſdom is a phraſe, which may be underſtood as comprehending the whole of religion:—But here it is uſed more eſpecially to expreſs the *prudence* and *diſcretion*, which ought to diſtinguiſh the Chriſtian life. It is to walk *circumſpectly*. And the reaſon aſſigned is, "becauſe the days are evil."

We will explain the duty, and then apply the argument.

I. The duty recommended is, "to walk *circumſpectly*."

The original word is often rendered, *diligently*; as where Herod inquired *diligently* of the wiſe men, what time the ſtar appeared; and commanded them to ſearch *diligently* for the child, whom the ſtar deſignated. It is compoſed of two words, one of

which ſignifies the *height* or *top* of a thing; the other ſignifies to *go* or *walk*. The phraſe then imports ſuch a *caution* and *exactneſs* in our Chriſtian converſation, as reſembles that which men uſe, when they are walking on the top of a precipice, or the ſummit of a building, where a ſmall miſtep would endanger a fall, and a fall would be fatal.

This circumſpection will beſt be illuſtrated by its application to particular caſes.

1. Walk circumſpectly that you may keep within the *line* of your *duty*.

Religion is not an extended plain, in which you may walk at large, and turn to any point without paſſing its limits; but it is a ſtrait and narrow path, in which you muſt purſue one ſteady courſe without diverting to either ſide. Your courſe often lies in a medium between two extremes. If from this courſe you deviate, you ſtep into the territory of vice. There are ſome virtues, which are not capable of exceſs. There are others which conſiſt in a mediocrity. With reference to theſe the Apoſtle ſays, "Let your *moderation* be known to all men."

Be circumſpect, that you may not *miſtake* your duty. "Prove all things; and hold faſt that which is good." Form your religious ſentiment by the plain doctrines and precepts of the goſpel—not by the vague opinions, or corrupt practices of the world. There are errors, which ſome embrace with airs of aſſurance, and defend with oſtentation of argument. But be not deceived: "Ponder well the path of your feet, and let your ways be eſtabliſhed."

Be watchful to retain a *ſenſe* of virtue and rectitude. "Give earneſt heed to the things which you have learned, leſt by any means you let them ſlip." —"Having choſen the way of truth, lay God's judgments before you, and cleave to his teſtimonies."

Be attentive, that you may conform to the *ſpirit* of God's commands.

Our Lord ſays, "Be wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves."—"Be wiſe;" but with your wiſdom combine "innocence." Be harmleſs, but not ſilly; inoffenſive, but not unguarded—be prudent, but not crafty; cautious, but not inſidious—act right yourſelves, and beware of men.

The Apoſtle ſays, "Be angry and ſin not." You may reſent an injury, but not indulge malevolence—may take meaſures for defence, but not ſtudy arts of revenge.

You are cautioned, "neither to deſpiſe the chaſtening of the Lord, nor to faint under his rebukes." Between theſe extremes lies your duty in the day of affliction. Be ſenſible of, but not impatient under God's corrections—be prayerful, but not complaining—be humble, but not diſconſolate.

It is a precept of the goſpel, "Take no thought for the morrow." This, however, muſt be underſtood in a ſenſe conſiſtent with the precepts, which require you to do your own buſineſs, abide in your calling and provide for your houſehold. In this mortal ſtate, look and prepare for changes; but be not ſolicitous about them. In all conditions maintain a balance of mind. Be neither anxious nor careleſs—neither perplexed nor ſtupid—neither thoughtleſs of contingences, nor diſtreſſed with the fear of them.

"Be gentle and eaſy to be entreated;" yet never ſtoop to ſinful compliances—be ſteady in duty, but not obſtinate in trifles—hear inſtruction and reproof; but be well perſuaded in your own minds—change your opinions and manners, when you are convinced they have been wrong; but be not children carried about with every wind of doctrine—be ſtrict, but not ſuperſtitious—cheerful, but not vain—ſerious, but not moroſe—uſeful in your places, but not buſy in other men's matters—exem-

plary in converſation, but not oſtentatious—eminently holy, but unaffectedly humble.

That in theſe and ſimilar caſes you may walk by the ſtrait line of duty, you muſt walk circumſpectly.

2. Walk circumſpectly, that you may *eſcape* the *ſnares* in your way.

"A prudent man foreſeeth evil and hideth himſelf: The ſimple paſs on and are puniſhed." Your greateſt ſecurity lies in watchfulneſs and prayer, leſt you enter into temptations. If they meet you, reſiſt them; but your firſt care muſt be to avoid them. If you raſhly throw yourſelves in their way and challenge them to the combat, there is little reaſon to hope, you will come off unhurt.

Often look forward to deſcry your dangers: Decline them, when you can: If you cannot decline them, arm yourſelves to meet them, and proceed with courage, relying on divine ſupport. Temptations will moſt eaſily prevail, when they take you by ſurpriſe.

Attend to your particular ſituation and condition in life. Poverty and riches, adverſity and proſperity, youth and age, a public and a private ſtation, have their reſpective dangers. Conſider your own ſtate, and beware of the temptations which it brings.

Examine your infirmities, biaſſes and corruptions. Thus you will learn what ſins and temptations moſt eaſily beſet you, and prevail againſt you; and thus you will know, where to place your ſtrongeſt guard.

Often review your paſt life, and reflect on former temptations, and the circumſtances from which they aroſe. Thus experience will teach you, how to employ your future caution.

Be circumſpect, that you may *detect* your enemies, when they approach you in *diſguiſe*. They will often come with deceitful pretenſions, appear in the faſcinating garb of friendſhip and innocence,

and addreſs you by guileful flatteries and ſubtil inſinuations. Beware, leſt you be led away with the errors of the wicked. Examine with care every ſuſpicious ſuggeſtion, whether from within or without. Be not ignorant of the deceitfulneſs of the heart, the wiles of the devil, the craftineſs of men, and the ſnares of the world, leſt you be ſeduced from your virtuous reſolution, and fall from your ſtedfaſtneſs.

Be vigilant, leſt while you oppoſe one temptation, you invite another; and while you avoid one extreme, you ruſh into the contrary. Dangers await you on both ſides: To guard on one ſide only, is to leave the other more defenceleſs.

Never neglect your duty under pretence of ſhunning a temptation. Where duty calls, thither you muſt go; apprized indeed of your dangers, but unawed by them. To decline known duty on account of foreſeen temptations, is a falſe caution.—The true caution is to collect the ſtrength of your faith, and implore the aid of God's grace.

Circumſpection is peculiarly neceſſary when temptations actually ſurround you. David ſays, "I will take heed to my ways, that I ſin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me."

3. Walk circumſpectly that you may wiſely *comport* with the *aſpects* of Providence.

The beauty of religion, yea, religion itſelf, greatly conſiſts in the correſpondence of your temper and behavior with your exiſting circumſtances. In the day of proſperity be joyful, and in the day of adverſity conſider. In affliction be patient and humble—in poverty be contented and ſubmiſſive. In ſtraits and perplexities caſt your cares on God—in affluence remember and ſhew kindneſs to the poor—in worldly ſucceſs be thankful, but rejoice with trembling—in preferment check your ambition and ſtudy to be extenſively uſeful—in every

relation fulfil its appropriate obligations. Every pious affection and virtuous exercise is then most amiable in itself, most acceptable to God, most comfortable to ourselves and most profitable to men, when it is best adapted to our relations and circumstances.

4. Be circumspect, that you may do *every* duty in its *time* and *place*.

You are to attend on the daily worship of God in your families and closets, and you are also to pursue the business of your respective vocations. Here call in the direction of wisdom, that you may not give to the former that time which belongs to the latter; nor that application to the latter which would divert you from, or unfit you for the former. Let each have its due share of your time and attention.

Be kind and beneficent to the poor; but take heed to yourselves, that ye do not your alms to be seen of men—that you feed not their vices, when you should relieve their necessities, and that you give not in ostentatious charity what you owe to the wants of your families or the demands of your creditors. And on the other hand, make not the calls of domestic exigence, or the obligations of social justice a mere *pretext* to excuse yourselves from doing good, when the occasion of others requires, and your own ability permits.

You are to regard principally the interest of your souls; but you may not neglect the care of your bodies. Here you must be circumspect, lest you suffer your temporal concerns to exclude those of eternity; or lest, under pretence of engagedness in religion you forget the obligations of industry, justice and beneficence.

You are to attend on the instituted ordinances of the gospel; but beware lest you substitute these for that solid and substantial holiness, which these were intended to promote.

You muſt obſerve the outward forms of religion with godly ſincerity; but never plead the poſſible want of ſincerity as a reaſon for neglecting the forms.

Prudence will direct you to avoid, when you innocently can avoid, the temporal inconveniences attending a profeſſion of religion. "When they perſecute you in this city, flee to another." But in your caution to eſcape the evils of the world, you muſt not decline a profeſſion, deny the faith and put away a good conſcience. "Whoſoever is aſhamed of Chriſt in an evil generation, of him will Chriſt be aſhamed in the preſence of his Father." This ſeems to be the caſe eſpecially intended in the text. As the times were dangerous, Chriſtians were to walk circumſpectly, that they might preſerve their integrity, and yet avoid the evils which threatened them. If both could not be done, they muſt maintain their integrity at all hazards.

5. Walk circumſpectly, that your *good* may not be *evil ſpoken of*.

On no conſideration may you do evil or neglect duty: But in the *manner* of performing your duty, you may often, with great advantage, accommodate yourſelves to the weakneſſes, humors and inclinations of others. Innocent liberties you muſt avoid, when your uſe of them would be perverted to the diſhonor of religion and the prejudice of your own character. In things indifferent be not rigid and uncomplying, but by an eaſy condeſcenſion pleaſe all men for their good. Thus the Apoſtle "was made all things to all men, that he might by all means ſave ſome."

The behavior of Chriſtians is watched, by ſome, that they may imitate it; by more, that they may vilify it. So act in all things, that you may encourage the virtuous, ſilence the captious, and cut off occaſion from them who deſire occaſion to re-

proach your profeſſion and the goſpel which you profeſs. "Walk in wiſdom toward them who are without. And let your ſpeech be always with grace ſeaſoned with ſalt, that ye may know how ye ought to anſwer every man."

I have illuſtrated the circumſpect behavior which the Apoſtle recommends. The argument by which he urges it, is this:

II. "The days are evil."

The argument was not peculiar thoſe early times. It is pertinent to all times.

The Chriſtian, while he dwells on earth, may ſay, "The days are evil," becauſe he finds in himſelf much diſorder and corruption. In the world of glory watchfulneſs will be ſuperceded by perſecution. Here he muſt walk circumſpectly, that he may not be drawn away by fleſhly luſts and worldly affections—may keep under his body and bring it into ſubjection—may ſtrengthen the principles of holineſs in his ſoul, and confirm his heavenly hopes.

The days are evil, as he is expoſed to various afflictions. He muſt walk circumſpectly, that he may comport with the aſpects of providence, accommodate himſelf to all changes of condition, learn obedience and reſignation to God by the things which he ſuffers, and by faith and patience obtain the promiſes.

The days are evil, for there are many adverſaries. Evil ſpirits, worldly objects, wicked examples and fleſhly inclinations oppoſe his progreſs. He muſt walk circumſpectly, that he may foreſee and avoid temptations, guard againſt a ſurpriſe, prevent the undue influence of ſenſible objects, and be blameleſs and harmleſs in the midſt of a perverſe nation.

The days are evil, as iniquity abounds. He muſt walk circumſpectly, that he may keep himſelf unſpotted from the world, may ſecure his good profeſſion from contempt, may ſtop the progreſs of

vice and error, and ſupport the languiſhing cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs.

Let us apply to ourſelves theſe conſiderations; and as we profeſs to be Chriſtians—to be children of light and of the day, let us not walk as thoſe who are in darkneſs, and know not at what they ſtumble; but let us walk wiſely and circumſpectly, redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.



SERMON XXXVIII.

EPHESIANS v. 16.

——*Redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.*

THE *redemption* of time, together with the *reaſon* for it, "the days are evil," will be the ſubject of our preſent meditations.

I. We will conſider what it is to *redeem* the time.

To *redeem* is to reclaim by price, or recover by labor that which has been loſt or alienated; or to preſerve by prudence that which is in danger. It is a metaphor taken from the practice of merchants, who obſerve the favorable ſeaſons of buying and ſelling, of making profits and repairing loſſes, who keep regular accounts of their expenſes and gains, and often inſpect their affairs, to know whether their intereſt is in progreſs or decline.

It is here ſuppoſed, that time is precious. That we may redeem it, we muſt make a juſt eſtimate of its value.

It is precious, becauſe we have much buſineſs on our hands—buſineſs which relates, not to our bodies only, but to our ſouls—not merely to this life, but to the whole duration of our exiſtence.

It is precious, becauſe it is ſhort and uncertain; and our work muſt be done ſoon, or it never can be done at all.

It is precious, becauſe part, and, with many, the greater part of it is gone already. What remains is increaſed in value, as it is contracted in length. We had none to waſte at firſt; we have need to be frugal now.

To redeem time is to regain what is loſt, and to ſave what is left.

Firſt: We muſt regain the time which is loſt.

Time paſt, indeed, cannot be recalled. Each moment, which flies off, is gone forever, and will return no more. Like the wind, it paſſeth away and cometh not again. But we do the beſt we can toward the recovery of loſt time, when we reflect with ſorrow on follies paſt, and reſolve to be wiſe in future. Though we cannot revoke the paſt guilty ſcenes, yet we may repent that we have lived as we have done, and be careful now to live as we ſhould have done. We ſhall not amend our lives, until we repent of paſt ſins, nor improve our future time well, until we are humbled, that the paſt has been ſpent ſo ill.

Sit down then, and take a ſerious review of life. Inquire how it has been employed—what attention you have paid to the great end of your exiſtence—what good you have done for others, or gained for yourſelves—what proficiency you have made in knowledge and holineſs—what hope you have acquired, and on what ground it reſts.

Upon ſtrict inquiry, many, I am afraid, will find, they have done little or nothing to the purpoſe, and their work is all to be done, when much of the day is ſpent. And all, no doubt, may confeſs, that their progreſs has not been anſwerable to the time they have enjoyed. Let the time paſt ſuffice to have been waſted in negligence and folly.

Henceforth "walk circumſpectly, redeeming the time."

Secondly: This phraſe imports prudence to ſave, and diligence to improve the time that remains.

In vain you pretend to lament your paſt folly, unleſs you apply your hearts to wiſdom." Godly ſorrow will work in you carefulneſs."

1. Enter on your work *ſpeedily*. Do you aſk, what is your work? It is time you knew. Conſult God's word; that will tell you. The religion of a ſinner muſt begin in repentance toward God, and faith toward Jeſus Chriſt; and it muſt be perfected in the works of faith and the fruits of repentance. "Think then on your ways, turn your feet into God's teſtimonies; make haſte and delay not to keep his commandments." No longer content yourſelves with diſtant purpoſes.—While you procraſtinate, inſtead of redeeming the time you have loſt, you are loſing what is left. How can you ſay, You repent, that you have trifled ſo long, if you continue to trifle ſtill? How can you ſay, You wiſh to recal your time, that you may improve it better, if ſtill you waſte your time as before? If you think of regaining loſt time, make immediate application to your work; for while you delay, time paſſes off; and the more you loſe, the more is to be redeemed, and the ſmaller your ſtock on hand.

2. Attend to your work with *diligence*.

A ſenſe of paſt ſlothfulneſs muſt excite you to ſeverer induſtry. The traveller, who lingers in the morning, muſt proceed with quicker pace to reach the intended ſtage by night. The Redeemer, who was always diligent in God's work, was more active, as his time grew ſhorter. "I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, while it is day: The night cometh, when no man can work."

"What your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work in the grave." There are duties which relate both to this, and to the future world. Theſe duties, conſidered in relation to their different objects, differ in importance; but both claim attention. Diligence in your ſecular duties is important, as a ſecurity againſt temptations, as conducive to your comfort and uſefulneſs, and as included in the obligations to juſtice and charity. It therefore, in its connexion and influence, is a ſubſtantial part of religion. Diligence in the work of your ſouls is the principal thing; for your future ſalvation is ſo much ſuperior to all other intereſts, that it is called, *The one thing needful.* However diligent you are in your ſecular calling, if, in the mean time, you neglect your ſalvation, you only trifle; for "what will you be profited, if you gain the whole world, and loſe your ſoul?"

Be not only fervent, but *ſteady* in your work. A wavering zeal makes no progreſs. "The double-minded man is unſtable in all his ways: Let not that man think, that he ſhall obtain any thing of the Lord."

Be *fruitful* in every good work. Aſpire to eminence in holineſs. "Forgetting the things which are behind, reach forward to the things which are before, and preſs toward the mark for the prize of the high calling."

3. *Guard* againſt the things, which *rob* you of your time.

An *indolent* habit is inconſiſtent with laudable actions. It creates imaginary, and magnifies real difficulties and dangers. It raiſes a lion, or a hedge of thorns in its way. It enervates the powers of the body, and ſtupifies the energy of the mind.

A *verſatile* humor is active, but wants patience. It forms great deſigns with confidence, enters upon

any inconvenience to yourſelves, and with ſenſible benefit to him; you may yield him much ſervice with ſmall expenſe, and do him laſting good in a ſhort time. By thus attending to the ſeaſons of duty, you may fill up your time faſt, and live long in a little while.

5. Wiſely *divide* your time among your *various duties.*

Lawful things will become criminal in you, if they occupy your time ſo far, as to exclude other things of greater importance. The duties of religion are conſiſtent with each other, and may be made to harmonize in practice. If they interfere, it is becauſe you throw them into confuſion, and your time into diſorder. Diſtribute your ſeaſons properly, and arrange your works prudently; then you will find means for all incumbent acts of beneficence and righteouſneſs; liberty for the daily exerciſes of piety and devotion; leiſure for family inſtructions and counſels, and time ſufficient for the proſecution of your ſecular labors.

We have ſeen how we are to redeem the time.

II. We will briefly attend to the argument ſubjoined, "The days are evil."

We ſhall not dwell long on this argument; for it has been in part anticipated under the preceding branch of our ſubject.

Our days may be called evil in a *moral* ſenſe, as we have done much evil, and there is evil ſtill within us. Some are under the full power of ſin. Theſe have not only the work of religion to begin, but much ſin to repent of, many vicious habits to eradicate, many fleſhly luſts to mortify, the work of their paſt lives to undo, and a new work to accompliſh. They have hitherto been travelling in a wrong path, and their guilty way they muſt tread back by the careful ſteps of repentance. We have all much work on our hands. If we have exerciſed repentance unto life, yet our work is not finiſh-



ed. There are corruptions to conflict with, temptations to watch against, daily duties to perform and continual improvements to make. We must cleanse ourselves from all pollutions, go on to perfection and give diligence to the full assurance of hope. Our work is important; upon our fidelity in it depends our comfort here, and our happiness hereafter. Now is the season to provide for eternity. There is no work in the grave. We have no time to spare.

Our days may be called evil, as they are *few*. We may say, with the patriarch, "Few and evil have been the years of our pilgrimage." Since our work is great and our time short, we have need to redeem the time by a diligent application of it to the work before us. A considerable proportion of our time is gone already: If this has been wasted, how frugally should we use what remains?

Some have arrived to that time of life, which is eminently called *an evil day*. It concerns them to review their days, prove their works, examine their hearts and know the condition of their souls. If they have been slothful in business, let them now become fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord. If they have slept in their guilt, it is high time to awake out of sleep; for their time is far spent.

The days are evil, as *iniquity abounds*. Many temptations to a waste of time, will meet us from the enticements and examples of the wicked, from the suggestions of evil spirits, and from the influence of worldly cares. Let us walk circumspectly redeeming the time. While the world around lies dead in sin, saints too easily lose their zeal. When the foolish virgins slept, the wise slumbered with them. Let us not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober.

The days are evil, as this is a state of *mortality*. We are subject to affliction and exposed to death. Our fellow mortals are dropping around us; and

we are ſoon to fall. Our laſt day is at hand; we are not ſure of another. What time may be allowed us, let us wiſely improve, in examining our hearts, correcting our errors, repenting of our ſins, amending our lives, cultivating religion in ourſelves, promoting it among others, and ſeeking the mercy of God for our own and the common ſalvation. Thus, when the time of our departure is come, we may adopt the language of the Apoſtle; "I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs."





SERMON XXXIX.

EPHESIANS v. 18.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excefs.

DRUNKENNESS, though in general diſallowed among the Heathens, was admitted in their Bacchanalia, as an expreſſion of gratitude to the God, who gave them wine. This Pagan rite the Apoſtle ſeems to have in his mind, when he ſays to the Epheſians, newly converted to the religion of Chriſt, "Be not ye drunk with wine, wherein is exceſs," diſſoluteneſs and luxury, "but be filled with the Spirit." Inſtead of thoſe wild and brutal indulgencies, by which you once pretended to expreſs your joy, ſeek the ſober and rational pleaſures, which are communicated by the holy Spirit.

The oppoſition here made between being filled *with wine*, and filled with *the Spirit*, ſhews that drunkenneſs is inconſiſtent with the pure religion taught by the goſpel.

We will, firſt, conſider the nature and extent of this vice; and then repreſent the guilt and danger which attend it.

I. We will conſider the nature and extent of the ſin, which the Apoſtle calls *drunkenneſs*.

"Be not *drunk* with wine."

The Apoſtle does not mean to debar Chriſtians from *all* uſe of wine and other ſpirituous drinks; for "every creature is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with thankſgiving." He adviſes Timothy to "uſe a little wine for his ſtomach's ſake." God cauſes the earth to bring forth wine, which rejoices, as well as bread, which ſtrengthens the heart of man. It is not a life of auſterity and mortification, but a life of rational ſobriety, which the goſpel enjoins. We are not to emaciate the body, and extinguiſh the glow of health by an abſtinence from innocent delights; but to keep under the body and bring it into ſubjection, by an abſtinence from fleſhly luſts.

"Take heed to yourſelves, ſays our Lord, "leſt at any time your hearts be *overcharged* with *ſurfeiting* and *drunkenneſs*, and the cares of this world." The uſe of meat and drink is to ſupport and comfort the body. Whatever is more than theſe, may be called *exceſs*.

Of intemperance, as of other vices, there are various degrees. The higheſt degree is ſuch an indulgence as ſuſpends the exerciſe of the mental and bodily powers. It is this idea, which is uſually attached to the word *drunkenneſs*. And ſome, who are wholly under the dominion of a ſordid appetite, may perhaps think themſelves temperate, becauſe they ſeldom or never run to this groſs exceſs. But remember; as you may be guilty of murder without taking away your neighbor's life, and of injuſtice without burning his houſe—ſo you may be guilty of intemperance without tranſforming yourſelf into a beaſt.

If by the indulgence of your appetite, you unfit your body for the ſervice of the mind, or your mind for the ſervice of God—ſo waſte your ſubſtance, as to defraud your family of a maintenance, or your creditors of their dues—become enſlaved to a ſenſual habit, and faſcinated to diſſolute com-

pany—are diverted from the duties of religion, or the buſineſs of your worldly calling—awaken criminal deſires and excite guilty paſſions—ſtupify your conſcience, extinguiſh the ſentiments of honor and baniſh the thoughts of futurity; you are chargeable with a criminal exceſs. Though the world, perhaps, will not ſtigmatize you as a drunkard, yet you are not far from that odious character. They who ſerve divers luſts and pleaſures—they who are given to appetite—they who are mighty to drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink—they who tarry long at the wine, and go to ſeek mixed wine—they who riſe up early that they may follow ſtrong drink, and continue until night, till wine inflame them—in a word, they who make proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof, fall under the condemnation of ſcripture, as well as the attrocious drunkard. I proceed,

II. To repreſent the guilt and danger which attend the vice under conſideration.

1. This is an ungrateful abuſe of God's bounty. God gives us all things richly to enjoy, and fills our hearts with food and gladneſs. He not only allows us neceſſary ſupplies, but indulges to us a thouſand comforts. A rich variety of creatures he has put into our hands, ſome for our ſupport, others for our delight. And ſhall we abuſe to his diſhonor the fruits of his beneficence, which are given to ſtrengthen our faculties, gladden our hearts and awaken our gratitude?

2. This vice diveſts the man of his native dignity, and ſinks him, below the brutal herds.

"Wine takes away the heart"—the underſtanding, which conſtitutes the man. It is only reaſon and ſpeech, which raiſe man above the animal tribes. While theſe powers are ſuſpended, what is he better than they? Man, brutalized by intemperance, is really more deſpicable, than the *native*

brute. The latter obeys; the former contradicts the nature, which God has given him. The one appears in his proper form; the other assumes a monstrous figure. His motions are wild, his visage distorted, his conversation silly, his manners ridiculous. Could the drunkard in a sober hour have a view of himself, as he appears under the power of intoxication, and be persuaded, that this uncouth and antic figure is really *himself*, he would, unless shame is extinguished, blush to be seen. He would retire to obscurity, conscious of his fall from manhood.

3. This vice is injurious to the body, as well as mind.

It benumbs the senses, enervates the limbs, palls the appetite, breeds diseases, creates dangers and hastens death. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; that go to seek mixed wine."

3. This consumes mens' substance.

When we see one given to intemperance, we at once predict his poverty, and we trust him with caution. "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and be clothed with rags."

We think the man unhappy whose substance is destroyed by fire. More wretched is he, whose estate is consumed by his lust. If this man has any sensibility left, how must his conscience reproach him? How must the cries of a helpless family pierce him? How must the demands of his disappointed creditors confound him? With what shame must he reflect on the infamous exchange which he has made of a decent fortune for a transient pleasure? How must it gall him to see strangers in possession of the inheritance which he received from his father's industry, and has alienated by his own folly? How must it mortify him to think that he is

changed from a man of reputable buſineſs, to a miſerable, reeling drunkard? And that they who once approached him with reſpect, now point at him with the finger of contempt?

But this is not the worſt of his caſe; for,

5. He has waſted his conſcience as well as his ſubſtance.

Dead to the feelings of honor, the obligations of virtue, and the apprehenſions of futurity, he proceeds in his guilty courſe, without fear or reſtraint.

Ye, who have addicted yourſelves to pleaſure and gaming, to diſſolute company, and the free uſe of ſtrong drink, inquire, whether you cannot perceive ſome unhappy effects of your indulgence. Is not the love of theſe ſenſual objects growing upon you, and gaining a more abſolute dominion over you? Are you not more indifferent about the concerns of immortality, than you were formerly?—Is not your conſcience more unfeeling to guilt, and leſs apt to rebuke your unworthy conduct?—Are you not more negligent in attending the duties of the cloſet, the family and the ſanctuary?—Are you not more diſpoſed to make light of religion, to cavil at the ſcriptures and to deſpiſe reproof?—Can you not more eaſily flatter yourſelves with ſafety in a way of ſin, and with a hope that the threatenings contained in the Bible will never be executed? Can you not remember the time, when you would have ſhuddered to hear thoſe licentious opinions, which now you liſten to with pleaſure; and to think of ſuch ſtupidity of ſoul, as you now really feel?—Is this a juſt deſcription of your ſtate? Then inquire from what cauſe this increaſing irreligion and impiety have proceeded. You need not be long in doubt. Your own experience, if you conſult it, will confirm the truth of the ſcripture, which deſcribes the the ſenſual, as hating inſtruction, deſpiſing reproof, ſcoffing at religion, and flattering themſelves, that

they ſhall have peace, though they add drunkenneſs to thirſt.

6. Intemperance generates other vices—impure luſtings, angry paſſions, profane language, inſolent manners, obſtinacy of heart and contempt of reproof. "Look not upon the wine," ſays Solomon, "when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup; for thine eyes ſhall behold a ſtrange woman, and thine heart ſhall utter perverſe things; yea, thou ſhalt be as he that lieth down in the midſt of the ſea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a maſt. They have ſtricken me, thou ſhalt ſay, and I was not ſick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When ſhall I awake? I will ſeek it yet again."

7. Intemperance has moſt lamentable effects on families.

It ſubverts order and government. How ſhall a man command his children and his houſehold, when he has not reaſon and virtue enough to command himſelf? How ſhall he govern their actions, when he is enſlaved to his own paſſions? If ſometimes, in a ſerious frame, he inculcates on them the duties of religion, his ſhocking example defeats his good exhortations. The parent, who would be regarded in his ſtation, muſt make his actions and inſtructions agree.

The government which an intemperate man exerciſes, is too paſſionate and wanton, too unſteady and inconſiſtent to be revered. Government, to be efficacious, muſt be calm and rational.

What devotion can there be in a family, whoſe head is given to intemperance? He is often abſent at the hours of prayer. If he is preſent, he is incapable of leading in the ſolemnity. His ſenſual habit renders him indifferent, and, by degrees, averſe to the ſacred exerciſe. You may doubtleſs recollect inſtances of the diſcontinuance of family worſhip from this unhappy cauſe. Some who have early begun, and for a time obſerved this im-

portant duty, falling into licentious connexions, have intermitted, and, at laſt, laid it aſide.

This vice deſtroys domeſtic peace and tranquillity. The man addicted to it, grows fractious, peeviſh and fretful. He falls out with his beſt friends, haſtily condemns their innocent, and even their moſt prudent behavior, is deaf to reaſon, ſpurns reſtraint and reſents advice. He conſiders as enemies thoſe who ſeek his welfare, and miſtakes their kind offices as tokens of hatred.

He makes all around him unhappy, and thoſe the moſt ſo, who ſtand in the neareſt relation. When he is abſent, how anxious are they, leſt he fall into temptation and a ſnare? What pain they feel, when he foams out his own ſhame? How they wiſh to conceal from the world the infamy which he betrays, and at which he cannot bluſh? When he returns from abroad. how fearful are they, leſt he come charged with paſſion to be let out on his houſehold?

This ſin brings family diſtreſs. It begets negligence, interrupts buſineſs, ſlackens induſtry, obſtructs education, and ſpreads diſcouragement and languor. While the intemperate houſeholder is indulging himſelf abroad, his family at home are miſerable for want of the comforts, which his labor ſhould provide, and his frugality ſhould preſerve; and his children are running wild for want of parental wiſdom and virtue to guide and reſtrain them.

8. The ſcripture abounds in the moſt ſolemn warnings againſt this ſin.

"Woe to them," ſays the prophet, "who are mighty to drink wine—the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe are in their feaſts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, nor conſider the operation of his hands." Our Savior cautions us, that "we be not at any time overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, leſt the day of the Lord

come upon us unawares." St. Paul ſays to the Romans, "Let us walk honeſtly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, but put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt." He ſays to the Theſſalonians, "Ye are children of light and of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkneſs; therefore let us not ſleep as do others, but let us watch and be ſober. For they that ſleep, ſleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night; but let us who are of the day, be ſober." "The time paſt of our life," ſays St. Peter, "may ſuffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in exceſs of wine, revellings, banquettings and abominable idolatries—I beſeech you, that ye abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul."

They, who are "drunk with wine," cannot "be filled with the Spirit." Drunkenneſs and revellings are works of the fleſh; theſe are contrary to the Spirit, whoſe fruits are moderation and temperance. They who "walk in the Spirit," will "not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh." And they who "walk in ungodly luſts, being ſenſual, have not the Spirit."

This ſin is of a hardening nature, and recovery from it peculiarly doubtful, becauſe it is more oppoſite, than moſt others, to that work of the Spirit, by which ſinners are awakened to conviction, and renewed to repentance. And it is an obſervable, but melancholy truth, that few, once enſlaved to it, return to a life of ſobriety. If now and then, awakened to a ſenſe of danger, they reſolve to eſcape from the ſnare, they are again entangled therein and overcome.

Finally: Conſider, that this ſin muſt be renounced, or the end of it will be death. "Nothing can enter into heaven, that defiles or works abomination." "Be not deceived—drunkards ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God." "The end of all things is at hand; be ſober, watch unto prayer, and let your moderation be known unto all men."



'Bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching. But if the evil ſervant ſhall ſay in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and ſhall begin to eat and drink with the drunken, his Lord ſhall come, when he looketh not for him, and ſhall cut him aſunder and appoint him his portion with hypocrites."

I have ſtated the nature and repreſented the danger of intemperance. Hear and take warning.

Abſtain from the appearance of evil; avoid the company of the diſſolute; be on your guard in times and places of temptation; reſiſt the beginnings, and ſhun the occaſions of ſo dangerous a vice. Be diligent in the duties of your calling, and daily commit yourſelves to divine protection.

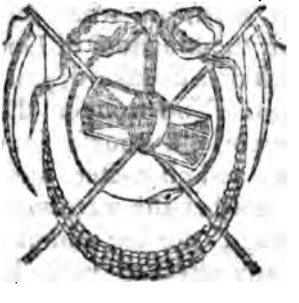
Let the profeſſors of religion decline thoſe liberties which might diſhonor their character, wound religion, or embolden the licentious.

To conclude: Think not that drunkenneſs is the only ſin that endangers mens' ſouls: Know that no unrighteous man, in whatever reſpect he is ſuch, can inherit the kingdom of God.

When you look on a drunkard, you view him with a kind of horror. You wonder that he can purſue, without remorſe, a courſe ſo deſtructive of health, ſubſtance and character, and ſo fatal to his ſoul; and that neither the warnings of others, nor his own experience, nor the admonitions of ſcripture can have any effect to make him wiſe. But turn a thought on yourſelf. Is there no iniquity in you? Conſider, that every allowed and cuſtomary ſin excludes from heaven. Perhaps you are not intemperate: But if you are unjuſt, envious, malicious, uncharitable, impatient, diſcontented, or in any reſpect vicious, you are as really unfit for heaven, as the drunkard. And you can no more be ſaved without repentance, than he. And repentance in you muſt be the ſame thing as in him. It muſt be a change of heart from the love

of ſin to the love of righteouſneſs. It muſt be a renovation in the Spirit of the mind, a renouncing of the old man, and an aſſuming of the new.

Think not yourſelf unconcerned in a diſcourſe of this kind, becauſe you never was a drunkard; but remember, that the ſame goſpel, which excludes the drunkard, excludes every habitual ſinner from the kingdom of heaven. While you wiſh your intemperate neighbor would apply this diſcourſe, apply it yourſelf. While you wiſh he would amend his ways, amend your own. Keep yourſelf from your iniquity, and lay aſide the ſin which eaſily beſets you. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.





SERMON XL.

EPHESIANS v. 18.

——*Be filled with the Spirit.*

INTEMPERANCE, though generally condemned among the Heathens, was allowed in ſome of their feſtival ſolemnities. Leſt the new converts in Epheſus ſhould retain a uſage, which had been deemed a part of religion, the Apoſtle gives them this caution, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is exceſs."—In oppoſition to being filled with wine, he exhorts them to be "filled with the Spirit."

We will inquire,

What is intended by the *Spirit*. What is implied in being *filled* with the Spirit. And,

By what *means* we may obtain this privilege.

I. What is intended by the *Spirit*, is our firſt inquiry.

The word *Spirit* is in ſcripture uſed in various ſenſes—for a human ſoul—an angel—the Deity. But when it is uſed indefinitely, as in the text, we are in moſt inſtances to underſtand by it that divine perſon who by way of eminence is called the *holy Spirit*, and who is repreſented as dwelling in the hearts of good men, to excite in them pure affections and aſſiſt them in religious duties.

propagate among the nations of the earth, whoſe languages were as diverſe as their ſentiments. In order to a ſucceſsful execution of this arduous commiſſion, it was neceſſary, that they ſhould be inſpired with the knowledge of divine myſteries; that they ſhould be ſecured from capital miſtakes in communicating their heavenly doctrines; that they ſhould be endued with the gift of tongues, ſo as to preach intelligibly to all men; that they ſhould be furniſhed with a power to work miracles in confirmation of the religion which they preached; and that they ſhould be divinely ſupported under all the trials which attended their work. Accordingly we find, that they were filled with miraculous gifts and powers; and that, in conſequence of their ſupernatural endowments, they propagated the goſpel with ſurpriſing ſucceſs. And many expreſſions concerning the beſtowment of the Spirit, have ſpecial reference to theſe miraculous gifts.

Theſe extraordinary operations were to continue only for a ſeaſon, until the Chriſtian church was eſtabliſhed, and the written revelation was completed. The Apoſtle ſays, "Whether there be prophecies, they ſhall fail; whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be knowledge," ſupernaturally communicated, "it ſhall vaniſh away."

Even in the apoſtolic age, it was not every preacher, who received his knowledge by inſpiration.—Timothy is directed to hold faſt the form of ſound words, which he had heard from the apoſtles, and to give attendance to reading, that he might rightly underſtand, and wiſely divide the word of truth. The goſpel itſelf has taught us, that no additional revelations are to be made; and that whoſoever ſhall preſume to preach another goſpel, or add to this which we have received, ſhall bring on himſelf the curſes written in it.

But though miraculous gifts have ceaſed, ſtill there is an internal influence of the Spirit common,

to this and all ages of the Chriſtian church. Our Savior promiſes his diſciples the Spirit to abide with them for ever. He repreſents the Father as giving the Spirit to every one who aſks it. And it is the character of all true Chriſtians, that they have the Spirit, are led by it and walk in it. Such expreſſions muſt intend ſome heavenly influence very different from immediate inſpiration and miraculous gifts. A man might have theſe gifts of the Spirit, and yet be a ſtranger to its renewing influence—might propheſy, ſpeak with tongues, abound in knowledge, and by faith remove mountains, and yet be nothing in religious eſtimation.—Among the workers of iniquity, whom Chriſt, at the laſt day, will reject, many will plead, that in his name they have caſt out devils and done other wonderful works. When therefore the Apoſtle exhorts believers to be filled with the Spirit, in oppoſition to being filled with wine, he muſt mean, that they ſhould ſeek that holy influence, which forms the mind to a meetneſs for the kingdom of heaven.

I would add; by the Spirit we may underſtand thoſe *holy tempers* which are called "the fruits of the Spirit," in oppoſition to "the works of the fleſh." The latter are "uncleanneſs, hatred, variance, wrath, ſtrife, drunkenneſs, revellings and ſuch like." The former are "love, joy, peace, longſuffering, gentleneſs, meekneſs, fidelity and temperance."—Chriſtians are directed to abound in love, hope and every good work—to be filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs and with the knowledge of God's will—to grow in grace, and build themſelves up on their moſt holy faith, adding to it virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs and charity, till all theſe things abound in them. As theſe are the fruits of the Spirit, ſo to be filled with them is to be filled with the Spirit. And theſe are principally intended by the Spirit in our text. We proceed to ſhew,

II. What is implied in being *filled* with the Spirit.

1. This ſuppoſes, what the goſpel uniformly teaches, our *dependence* on the grace of God in the religious life. Though we are moral and intelligent beings, yet ſuch is the depravity of our nature, that "we are not ſufficient of ourſelves to think any thing, as of ourſelves, but our ſufficiency is of God." Paul confeſſes, "By the grace of God I am what I am—I labored abundantly, yet not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

2. The expreſſion implies, that there is a *ſupply* of the Spirit for them who ſeek it. "It hath pleaſed the Father, that in Chriſt all fulneſs ſhould dwell, and of his fulneſs we may all receive grace for grace—grace ſufficient for us—grace which is made perfect in our weakneſs."

3. It farther imports an *actual participation* of ſuch meaſures of grace as are competent to the exigencies of the Chriſtian life.

It is the office of the Spirit, to transform us by the renewing of the mind—to carry on the work of ſanctification in us—to ſecure us againſt temptations—to preſerve us from apoſtacy—to comfort us in afflictions—to aſſiſt us in prayer—to ſeal us unto the day of redemption—to witneſs with our Spirits that we are the children of God. When we are filled with the Spirit, we enjoy his influences in theſe various reſpects.

We are to aſk *large* communications of grace.—Among real Chriſtians there are different degrees of holineſs, conſtancy, zeal and hope. Some under the ſame means make greater attainments; and ſome with the ſame holy attainments have greater comforts than others. All ſhould ſeek ſuch a fulneſs of the Spirit, as to riſe more and more above their infirmities, imperfections and fears, and to abound more and more in purity, peace and joy.

This fulneſs implies a *ſteady* enjoyment of the Spirit. As we are always dependent on the influ-

ence of providence for the ſupport and comfort of the natural life, ſo we are always dependent on the influence of grace for the preſervation of the religious life, and for thoſe hopes and joys which ſpring from it. The Apoſtle ſays, "I am crucified with Chriſt; nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." We ſhould not content ourſelves with occaſional good frames, but deſire grace, that we may walk worthy of the Lord to *all* pleaſing, and be fruitful in *every* good work.

The expreſſion farther implies grace to help *in time of need.* The Chriſtian in his courſe of probation experiences a variety of trials—he paſſes through proſperity and adverſity—he meets with temptations from without, and oppoſitions from within. He is ſometimes in darkneſs and fear, and ſometimes in light and joy. In this variety of circumſtances, he needs grace to help: It concerns him therefore to keep near to God, and to maintain daily intercourſe with him, that he may receive grace ſuitable to his condition and adequate to his wants.

This fulneſs imports *growth* in holineſs. As the Spirit is given to carry on the work of ſanctification in the ſoul, ſo one who is filled with it will be full of goodneſs—full of every virtuous temper and work. It is vain to pretend, that we have the preſence of the Spirit, further than we bring forth his holy fruits.

4. I would obſerve; this fulneſs of the Spirit is oppoſed to *exceſs*—to all irregularity, wildneſs and extravagance, as well as to groſs palpable vice.—The divine operations on the minds of Chriſtians are calm and rational, tending not to confuſion, but to peace.

As God has given us a complete revelation, it cannot, in the preſent day, be a work of the Spirit to communicate new revelations, but to direct us in

the uſe of that which we have. Nothing, therefore is to be regarded as a dictate of the Spirit, which contradicts, or goes beyond that which is written. By this we muſt try every Spirit, whether it be of God. By this only can we diſtinguiſh the divine influence from the deluſions of fancy, or the ſuggeſtions of Satan. We are not to ſuppoſe this influence to be perceptible immediately and by itſelf: Its correſpondence with the word of truth is the evidence by which we know its divinity. In its ordinary operations it is "the Spirit of a ſound mind." It diſturbs not, but aſſiſts the ſober exerciſe of reaſon. Paul ſays to the Corinthians, "The Spirits of the prophets are *ſubject* to the prophets." Many in the Corinthian church, had run into great exceſſes in their worſhipping aſſemblies. They either unauthoriſed aſſumed the buſineſs of preaching, or conducted it in a reprehenſible manner. Several would ſpeak at once, confounding and interrupting one another. Such as could ſpeak in unknown tongues preferred theſe to plain edifying language. In the multitude of ſpeakers, their worſhip was protracted to an unreaſonable length. The Apoſtle reproves theſe diſorders. He ſays, if a ſtranger ſhould come into their aſſemblies, he would think they were mad. He inſtructs them, that not every private Chriſtian, but the prophets only ſhould ſpeak in the church; that theſe ſhould ſpeak by courſe, one after another, and not more than two or three in the ſame meeting; that they ſhould utter with the tongue words eaſy to be underſtood, that ſo all may learn and be comforted.

Some in excuſe for their extravagancies, would plead, that they were under an uncontrolable operation of the Spirit—that they had no command of their tongues—that their zeal boiled with a fervor which muſt have vent. But the Apoſtle tells them, The Spirit never urges men to exceſs, or diſ-

poſſeſſes them of the power of ſelfgovernment. "The Spirits of the prophets are *ſubject* to the prophets; for God is not the author of confuſion, but of peace, as in all churches of the ſaints."

This we ſhould always bear in mind, that the operations of the Spirit are conſonant to ſound and ſober reaſon; and the more one is filled with the Spirit, the farther is he removed from every irregularity of temper, exceſs of paſſion and indecency of behavior.

The good Chriſtian feels a concern for the honor of the goſpel and the ſalvation of his fellow-ſinners. But if, under pretence of godly zeal, the private Chriſtian, or the youthful convert aſſumes the public teacher, he wanders from his place—he runs to exceſs—he ſtretches himſelf beyond his line;—and this irregularity is not a fruit of the Spirit, but a work of the fleſh.

A true Chriſtian deſires to ſee greater purity in the church. But if his zeal urges him to withdraw from the church, inſtead of laboring to reform it; this is an exceſs; and this operation of his zeal is from the Spirit of the world—not from the Spirit of God.

The ſinner under convictions has a deep ſenſe of guilt and danger, and an ardent deſire to eſcape eternal wrath. But if he falls into horrible, deſpairing apprehenſions of his ſtate, this is an exceſs—for the goſpel ſets hope before him. His convictions may be from the Spirit; but his deſpondency proceeds from ſome other cauſe.

The awakened ſinner gives himſelf much to prayer; and, as far as he is influenced by the Spirit, he prays with deep humility and earneſt deſire, and he ſeeks ſilent retirement. Now if, inſtead of repairing to his cloſet and pouring out his heart before God in ſecret, he goes into the highways and fields, and utters his prayers with noiſy vociferations, he is filled with pride, not with the Spirit;

for in ſuch prayers there is exceſs. I proceed to ſhew,

III. What *we* are to *do*, that we may be filled with the Spirit.

This the Apoſtle enjoins as matter of duty. We are required to "have grace, that we may ſerve God acceptably." It is uſual in ſcripture to command as duty, the ſame things which are promiſed as a privilege, becauſe in order to our receiving the promiſe, there are means to be applied. God promiſes, "A new heart will I give you." And he alſo commands, "Make you a new heart." Converſion, though a gift of divine grace, is a gift beſtowed in ſuch a way as leaves occaſion for the uſe of means.

We are not to ſuppoſe that any thing done by us *deſerves* the influence of the Spirit. Whatever connexion there is between the means uſed by us, and the benefits beſtowed upon us, it is a connexion founded in divine favor.

Nor are we to ſuppoſe, that thoſe endeavors, which are the means of obtaining the Spirit, *originate* from ourſelves. The goſpel is a miniſtration of the Spirit. Where God ſends the former, he grants the latter. And theſe are the ſpring of all the good thoughts, deſires and reſolutions which are found in fallen men. Hence the converſion of ſinners and the ſanctification of believers are as really owing to the ſovereign grace of God, as if they were wrought immediately, without any endeavors of ours. We are to acknowledge the grace of God in ſuch a ſenſe as excludes perſonal worthineſs; but not in ſuch a ſenſe as excludes perſonal obligation.

That we may be filled with the Spirit, we muſt be filled with the knowledge of God's will. The new man is renewed in knowledge. He is begotten by the word of truth, as well as born of the Spirit. God grants the Spirit in the hearing of

faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

We muſt exerciſe ourſelves in ſerious conſideration; for it is by this that knowledge is reduced to practice. We muſt contemplate the purity and extent of God's law, compare ourſelves with it, and judge ourſelves by it. We muſt attend to the threatenings and promiſes of the goſpel, and apply them as far as they are pertinent to our character. We muſt meditate on the ſolemn ſcenes of futurity, the nature and neceſſity of repentance, the boundleſs mercy of God, and the marvellous ſcheme of redemption—and thus awaken and preſerve in our minds an active ſenſe of the important things of religion.

We muſt abſtain from all known obſtructions of the Spirit.

When the Apoſtle exhorts us to be filled with the Spirit, he warns us againſt ſenſuality and exceſs. When he cautions us not to grieve the Spirit, he forbids idleneſs, injuſtice, clamor and evil ſpeaking.

We muſt improve with particular attention thoſe ſeaſons, when conſcience is awakened, and ſerious purpoſes are excited.

Having ſet out in religion, we muſt hold on our way, and look to ourſelves that we loſe not the things which have been wrought for us.

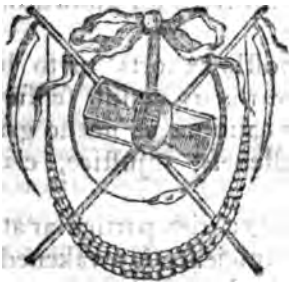
We muſt continue inſtant in prayer. "God will be inquired of." "Aſk and ye ſhall receive."

We muſt give ourſelves up to God through Chriſt, with a purpoſe to ſerve him conſtantly; and muſt frequently renew our covenant with him, humbling ourſelves for paſt tranſgreſſions, and ſeeking grace for new obedience. Thus we may hope for a ſupply of the Spirit.

We are not to imagine, that the evidence of converſion and the joy of ſalvation will come ſuddenly. We are directed "to ſeek for glory by a con-

tinuance in well doing, and to give diligenc
the full assurance of hope to the end."

The joy, which comes in a way diverse f
this, is not joy in the Holy Ghost, but the jo
the hypocrite. They who walk in the comfor
the Holy Ghost, are such as walk in the fe
God.



SERMON XLI.

EPHESIANS v. 19.

Speaking to yourſelves in pſalms and hymns, and ſpiritual ſongs, ſinging and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.

THE Heathens, in their drunken feſtivals to the god of wine, uſed to celebrate his bounty in impure and wanton ſongs. The Ephesians juſt converted from Paganiſm, the Apoſtle inſtructs in a more rational and excellent devotion. He teaches them to ſing, not impure but ſpiritual ſongs; to direct their devotion, not to the imaginary god of wine, but to the Lord of nature and giver of all things; to ſing, not with wild and wanton airs, but with the melody of the heart; and ſo to conduct this branch of worſhip, that they may not corrupt, but comfort and edify one another.

Similar to our text is the Apoſtle's inſtruction to the Coloſſians. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful. Let the word of Chriſt dwell in you richly in all wiſdom, teaching and admoniſhing one another in pſalms, hymns and ſpiritual ſongs, ſinging with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

I. The ſinging of pſalms is here enjoined as a ſacred branch of ſocial worſhip.

There are certain inſtrumental ſounds, which inſpire with ardor and reſolution; and others which melt and diſſolve. Much greater effects may be produced by the living ſound of human voices, harmoniouſly combined in ſinging thoſe ſacred ſongs, which are filled with ſentiments of piety and devotion. The power of muſic to tranſport the ſoul we have all experienced; and its effect is ſtrongly expreſſed by the prophet, when, deſcribing the heavenly inhabitants as ſinging their changes in divine worſhip and crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty," he ſays, "The poſts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the houſe was filled with ſmoke."—I proceed,

II. To conſider the *matter* or *ſubject* of our ſinging. This the Apoſtle expreſſes by *pſalms*, *hymns* and *ſpiritual ſongs*.

By *pſalms* is doubtleſs intended that collection of ſacred poems, which paſſes under this name, and is one of the canonical books of ſcripture. By *hymns* may be deſigned other poetical compoſitions of ſcripture, as the ſongs of Moſes, Hannah, Zachariah, Simeon and others. By *ſpiritual ſongs* may be meant thoſe pious and devout ſongs, which in that age were compoſed by prophets and holy men in the church, under the immediate influence of the Spirit. That there was ſuch a ſpiritual gift in the apoſtolic age is evident from ſeveral paſſages in the 14th chapter of Firſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians—"I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the underſtanding alſo: I will *ſing with the Spirit*, and I will ſing with the underſtanding alſo."——"When ye come together, every one of you hath a *pſalm*, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation."

Under the Moſaic diſpenſation, there were certain ſongs or pſalms, ſtatedly uſed in the temple worſhip. On ſpecial occaſions new ſongs were

compoſed by holy men under divine influence, and delivered to the chief muſician to be ſet to muſic, and ſung in the congregation. In the early Chriſtian church the practice was the ſame. Spiritual ſongs compoſed occaſionally were admitted among the pſalms and hymns of the Old Teſtament.

The matter which we ſing ſhould be accommodated to the occaſion of the worſhip. In ordinary caſes we may ſing any pſalm ſuited to the general purpoſe of devotion. In ſpecial caſes we ſhould ſelect thoſe which beſt correſpond with the aſpects of providence.

In this goſpel age our pſalmody ought not to be *confined* to that ſmall portion of ſcripture, which is called "the book of pſalms." We may take ſpiritual ſongs from the New Teſtament, as well as from the Old. The matter of our pſalmody muſt be formed agreeably to the ſacred oracles; but we need not be reſtricted to any one part of ſcripture. The apoſtle's direction is "Let the *word* of CHRIST dwell in you *richly* in all wiſdom, teaching and admoniſhing one another in ſpiriual ſongs."

If in the days of David it was thought neceſſary, that on extraordinary occaſions, a new ſong ſhould be ſung—ſurely now we may ſing ſome new ſongs on the glorious occaſion of the goſpel. If the temporal deliverances vouchſafed to the people of Iſrael, were the ſubject of their public praiſe—much more ſhould the great ſalvation purchaſed by the Son of God be the ſubject of *ours*. And doubtleſs it is more proper to celebrate this in the plain language of the goſpel, than in the obſcure diction of prophecy. The church in heaven ſing a *new* ſong—not only the ſong of Moſes, but alſo that of the *Lamb*.

As new ſongs were ſung in the Jewiſh church, ſo they were ſet to new tunes. They were firſt committed to the chief muſician, that he might adapt to the ſubjects the muſic in which they were to be

ſung. There was a variety in the tunes, as well as pſalms, to enliven the devotion of the heart. Such is our frame that a ſameneſs of ſound flattens on the ear.

III. We are directed to ſing, *making melody*—to ſing with the *underſtanding*—to *teach* and *admoniſh* one another with ſpiritual ſongs—to do all things *decently* and *in order*.

The uſe of muſic in ſocial worſhip is to aſſiſt and enliven the devotion of the heart. And when the muſic is performed with melody of ſound, exactneſs of time and harmony of voices, it greatly contributes to this end. But a confuſed and grating diſcord of harſh and untutored voices, inſtead of kindling, chills the ſpirit of devotion and damps the ardor of the ſoul.

Singing cannot be performed to edification and comfort without *ſkill*. "Play *ſkilfully*," ſays the pſalmiſt. The ſingers in the Jewiſh worſhip "made one ſound." They kept time as exactly as if their voices were all melted into one. For this purpoſe they were placed together in a collected body.—— Upon that grand ſolemnity, when Solomon brought up the ark from the city of David and ſet it in the holy place, "the Levites, who were the ſingers, ſtood at the eaſt end of the altar, and with them the prieſts ſounding with trumpets; and the trumpeters and the ſingers were as *one* to make *one* ſound.

Care was taken that the ſingers ſhould be well inſtructed. The chief of the Levites, by David's order, "appointed *ſome* of their brethren to be ſingers." They ſelected ſuch as they found moſt capable of that ſervice. And theſe were put under ſkilful inſtructors. "The ſons of Heman were under the hands of their father for ſong in the houſe of the Lord." And they with their brethren "were inſtructed in the ſongs of the Lord, and were all cunning." And Chenaniah the chief of the Levites "inſtructed in ſong becauſe he was ſkilful."

When the Levites ſang in divine worſhip, they were led by a principal muſician, "who was over the ſong." It is ſaid, "The maſter of the ſong," or *carriage*, "was with the ſingers." Some ſay, He *carried* or conducted the ſong, and gave all the ſingers the *time* by a motion of his hand. Hence their voices were "as one to make one ſound."

We may form ſome conception of the ſolemnity with which the temple worſhip among the Jews was conducted, by thoſe alluſions to it, which we find in the book of the Revelation. St. John, deſcribing the heavenly worſhip, ſays, "The four living creatures or cherubim, and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them golden harps, and they ſung a new ſong." As ſoon as they ſtruck the ſong, he ſays, "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the four cherubim and the elders, ſaying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain." No ſooner had the multitude of angels joined their voices, than all nature was tuned to harmony, and creation was one univerſal concert, like the whole congregation of Iſrael joining with the prieſts and levites in the ſongs of the temple. "Every creature in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, heard I ſaying, Bleſſing, and glory, and honor, and power be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."—"And the four cherubim ſaid, AMEN."——They made a ſolemn pauſe in the muſic. Whereupon the four and twenty elders fell proſtrate before the throne in humble adoration. This alludes to a cuſtom in the temple worſhip of making pauſes in ſinging. The Jewiſh writers ſay, that in each pſalm were made three intermiſſions, during which the trumpets continued the ſound; and then the people fell down and worſhipped.

John repreſents this new ſong in the heavenly temple, as being ſeveral times repeated with little

variety. Here is a manifeſt alluſion to the manner of ſinging in the temple. When the chief ſingers began the ſong, the choſen choir, ſtanding near them, round about the altar, ſtruck in with them. And certain emphatical parts of the ſong were repeated. In theſe repetitions the aſſembly joined their voices. That ſuch repetitions were uſual in the temple muſic, is evident from the manner in which ſundry pſalms are compoſed.

It appears, that this branch of worſhip in the Jewiſh church was conducted with great order and ſolemnity; and the frequent alluſions to it in the New Teſtament ſhew, that it is ſtill of equal importance, and ought to be conducted, not indeed with all the ſame ceremonies, but with equal ſeriouſneſs and devotion. This leads me to obſerve,

IV. That in ſinging we muſt "make melody *in our hearts to the Lord.*"

If ſinging is a part of religious worſhip, then *this*, as well as our prayers, muſt be directed to God.

We muſt ſing in obedience to his command—with a ſenſe of his preſence—with hearts diſpoſed for his ſervice—with affections correſponding to the matter of the pſalm. If the ſubject be a petition, confeſſion, thankſgiving, or adoration, our hearts muſt harmonize with it, and beat time to it. When we make a pſalm of our own, and offer it to God with ſuitable ſentiments, then we "ſing with grace in our hearts to the Lord." The melody of the heart is the conſent of all the powers and affections of the ſoul in the ſervice of God.

We muſt ſing with a ſpirit of benevolence, peace and condeſcenſion to one another, and to all men. "When ye ſtand praying," ſays our Lord, "forgive, if ye have ought againſt any man." We muſt do the ſame when we ſtand ſinging. We muſt bring into the worſhip of God—into our ſongs, as well as prayers, a ſocial, meek and quiet ſpirit.—"Speak to yourſelves," or to one another, "in

pſalms, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts—teach and admoniſh one another in ſpiritual ſongs, ſinging with grace in your hearts to the Lord." We ſing with grace and melody, when our devout affections charm down our earthly paſſions, quiet their tumults, compoſe all jarring diſcords, all diſcontents, anxieties, envies and jealouſies, and ſmoothe the ſoul into peace, gratitude, hope and joy.

One end of ſocial worſhip, and particularly of ſinging, is to improve a friendly and benevolent temper. "Be like minded one toward another according to Chriſt Jeſus, that ye may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God." Can we join our voices in ſinging the ſame ſpiritual ſongs to the ſame univerſal parent, and at the ſame time forget our mutual relation, and our obligation to mutual love? In the muſic itſelf there is ſomething adapted to promote a kind and ſocial diſpoſition. The harmonious coincidence, the ſweet ſymphony of different voices teaches our hearts to mingle in Chriſtian duties, huſhes tumultuous paſſions, and expels the evil ſpirit of pride, envy, malice and diſcord. When David touched his harp, Saul's evil ſpirit fled. The man who can hear holy anthems ſung to the univerſal parent, with voices ſweetly mingling and harmonizing together, and not feel himſelf ſoftened into benevolence and love, and moulded into condeſcention and peace, muſt have a ſoul rugged as the rocks, and ſtubborn as an oak.

REFLECTIONS.

1. If ſinging is an inſtituted part of divine worſhip, all ſhould take a ſhare in it. Some, through want of natural capacity, early education, or favorable opportunity, may be unable to join their voices in this exerciſe. But theſe, no leſs than

others, ſhould be concerned to make melody in their hearts.

2. From our ſubject we learn, that every one, according to his ability, is bound to promote the pſalmody of the church. As many as are capable ſhould encourage it by acquiring the neceſſary ſkill, and taking an active part in it. They who cannot do this, ſhould be more ſolicitous to promote the object in other ways—by furniſhing thoſe under their care with the means of inſtruction—by giving countenance to a revival of ſacred muſic, when it declines, and by cheerfully imparting their money in the cauſe, as occaſion requires. From principles of common equity, as well as from examples recorded in ſcripture, it is manifeſt, that the expenſe of maintaining the pſalmody of the church ſhould be aſſumed by the community, and not left wholly on them who perform the ſervice.

3. Let this thought be deeply impreſſed on every heart, that pſalmody is a branch of divine worſhip. Let it be regarded, not as a theatrical exhibition, but as a religious ſolemnity.

When we ſee an aſſembly united in the praiſes of God—hear them ſing divine ſongs with all the charms of muſic, and at the ſame time, behold in their appearance that gravity, ſedateneſs and reverence, which indicate their ſouls to be impreſſed with divine things, we are raptured and tranſported; we are carried into the throngs of God's ancient temple; we almoſt imagine ourſelves in the midſt of the heavenly aſſembly. But if, on the contrary, we obſerve a behavior, which beſpeaks pride, paſſion, irreverence and levity, we loſe the charms of muſic—we are ſhocked and confounded. As you regard the honor of God's worſhip, and your own and the common edification, conduct your pſalmody with that gravity, peace and love, which become God's houſe for ever; and apply

this and every part of worſhip to your preparation for the higher ſolemnities of God's temple in heaven.

Imagine you ſaw heaven opened, and the choirs of angels ſtanding before the throne of God; imagine you heard them tuning their harps and voices in anthems of praiſe to the great Creator of the univerſe, and the gracious Redeemer of fallen men: Will not the thought elevate you above the dull delights of earth, and prompt a wiſh to riſe and mingle with the celeſtial worſhippers?—Imagine you beheld the Lamb ſtanding on mount Zion, and with him the happy thouſands who have his Father's name written in their foreheads; and from thence heard a voice, as the ſound of many waters and as the noiſe of mighty thunder, the muſic of harpers playing on their harps, and the voice of ſingers ſinging their new ſong, which none but the redeemed can learn; would you not wiſh to join the joyful aſſembly and mingle your voice with theirs?—Imagine you heard them crying with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb," and ſaw them falling before the throne and worſhipping God in ſtrains like this, "Amen; bleſſing, and glory, and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honor, and power, and ſtrength, be unto God forever and ever, Amen;" would not your ſouls at ſuch a view, kindle into devotion and love, and burſt into ſongs of praiſe? This view of the worſhipping aſſembly above is held forth to us, that we may learn and imitate their piety. Endeavor then ſo to worſhip God by ſinging and all other appointed forms, that you may be admitted to join your voice with theirs in ſinging the glories of God and the Redeemer through eternal ages.

SERMON XLII.

EPHESIANS v. 20.

GIVING *thanks always, for all things to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

THE Heathens in their Bacchanalia, held drunkenneſs to be commendable, as an expreſſion of gratitude to the God who gave them wine. This Pagan cuſtom the Apoſtle has in view, when he ſays to his Epheſian converts, verſe 18. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is exceſs, but be filled with the Spirit, ſpeaking to yourſelves in pſalms."—"Inſtead of thoſe abominable exceſſes, by which you once expreſſed your joy, ſeek now thoſe ſober and rational pleaſures, which are communicated by the holy Spirit; and inſtead of thoſe drunken ſongs by which you formerly celebrated the feaſts of the god of wine, ſpeak ye now to one another in pſalms, hymns and ſpiritual ſongs, making melody in your hearts to the Lord—giving thanks always for all things to God the Father through Jeſus Chriſt."

I. The *duty* here enjoined is to *give thanks.*

Thankfulneſs is ſuch a ſenſe of favors received from, and of obligations due to a benefactor, as diſpoſes us to make ſuitable acknowledgments and returns.

Gratitude to God is attended, not with wild and frantic mirth, but a ſober and collected mind. They who underſtand the loving kindneſs of the Lord, have wiſely conſidered his doings. God complains of unthankful Iſrael, "I have nouriſhed and brought up children, but they have rebelled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib; but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider."

There are ſome unuſual interpoſitions of providence which arreſt the attention, while common favors, though in their nature more important, are overlooked, or little regarded. At a comet we gaze with aſtoniſhment; but ſcarcely lift our eyes to the ſuperior wonders which the fair evening preſents to our view. The riſing and the ſetting ſun, the deſcent of enriching ſhowers, the viciſſitudes of ſummer and winter, the continuance of life, the enjoyment of health, ſupplies of food and raiment, ſucceſs in our daily employments, the means of knowledge and virtue, and the hopes of glory and immortality, are by multitudes little noticed, and rarely thought of. But where is the man who would not thank God for a ſhort ſuſpenſion of his torture in a fit of the gout, or for a providential diſcovery and extinction of a flame which threatened his dwelling? If we regard not the daily operations and bleſſings of God, we live in habitual unthankfulneſs. Theſe, though moſt eaſily overlooked, are moſt worthy of our notice.

A grateful heart retains the impreſſion of *paſt* mercies. "It remembers God's wonders of old, meditates on all his works and forgets not any of his benefits."

Gratitude ſees a real *value* in God's bleſſings. This is its language; "O how great is thy goodneſs which thou haſt laid up for them who fear thee, and haſt wrought for them who truſt in thee! O love the Lord, all ye his ſaints."—"O Lord, how great are

thy works! Thy thoughts are very deep. A brutiſh man knoweth not, neither doth a fool underſtand this. How excellent is thy loving kindneſs! Therefore the ſons of men put their truſt under the ſhadow of thy wings."

A ſenſe of our *unworthineſs* enters into the eſſence of thankfulneſs. Why ſhould we bleſs God for that, which we call the fruit of our own merit, and which, we think, he could not juſtly deny us? "I am not worthy, ſays the patriarch, of the leaſt of all the mercies which thou haſt ſhewed unto thy ſervant." "What is man," ſays David, "that thou art mindful of him? And the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him? How excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

In the exerciſe of gratitude, we ſhall *improve* God's favors to the *ends* for which he beſtows them. He beſtows his benefits upon us that we may be happy in the enjoyment, and uſeful in the diſtribution of them. Solomon ſays, "I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life." The Apoſtle directs us, "to offer the ſacrifice of praiſe continually;" and he eſpecially cautions us, that "to do good and to communicate we forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed."

Gratitude delights to *expreſs* its feelings and ſentiments. "Offer the ſacrifice of praiſe," ſays the Apoſtle, "even the fruit of the lips." We muſt be thankful to God, and bleſs his name; praiſe him with a ſong, and magnify him with thankſgiving; ſhew forth his praiſe and talk of his wonderous works.

Thankfulneſs ſtudies a ſuitable return.

The glorious ſelfſufficient Jehovah can receive no real benefit from us. If we are righteous, what do we to him? He is exalted far above all bleſſing and praiſe. But yet, as his creatures and dependants, we are under indiſpenſible obligations to love

and ſerve him. Theſe obligations are mightily increaſed and ſtrengthened by his favors. His goodneſs ſhould lead us to repentance. When favor is ſhewed us we ſhould learn righteouſneſs. His mercies ſhould perſuade us to preſent ourſelves to him, as living ſacrifices. This is our reaſonable ſervice. His diſintereſted love ſhould awaken in us ſentiments of benevolence to our fellow men. "Love your enemies," ſays our Savior, "do good and lend—and ye ſhall be the children of the Higheſt; for he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful. Let us proceed,

II. To conſider the character of that being, to whom our thanks muſt be ſupremely directed. "Give thanks to GOD, even the FATHER."

God is the Father of the univerſe, and the giver of all the bleſſings which we receive, and which we behold around us. Every good gift comes down from him.

To him we muſt give thanks; for all things are his. We walk on his earth, and breathe his air; we are ſuſtained by his food, and clothed with his garments; our frame is his work, our reaſon is his inſpiration, and our ſpirits are preſerved by his influence.

To him we muſt give thanks, for he has given us all things richly to enjoy. He has formed a ſpacious world for us to inhabit, and ſubjected a variety of creatures to our dominion. He commands his ſon to warm us, his winds to fan us, his rains to refreſh us, his fields to ſupport us, and his brutal herds to ſerve us. He has furniſhed us with ſenſes and appetites, by which we are capable of delight in the uſe of material objects; and given us an intelligent mind, which can contemplate him in his works, and enjoy him in his gifts.

This world is a temporary abode, in which we are to prepare for glory and immortality. And God has given us all things which pertain to life

and godlineſs, through the knowledge of the Jeſus Chriſt, who has called us to glory and virtue.

To open a way for, and give us a hope of admiſſion to his favor, he has ſent his divine Son into our world, who, having aſſumed our nature, has *borne* our ſins in his body, expiated our guilt by his death, confirmed the truth of his doctrines by his reſurrection, and ever lives in heaven to make interceſſion for us.

To God we muſt give thanks, for his goodneſs is free and diſintereſted. He gives liberally and upbraids not—he neither faints nor is weary—he is the Father of mercies—his tender mercies are over all his works, and they endure forever.

III. We are required to give thanks *always* to God.

This and other univerſal terms muſt be underſtood with ſuch limitations, as the nature of the ſubject ſuggeſts. Various are the duties which religion enjoins; each one claims its place, and none has a right to claim more.

This expreſſion imports, in general, that we ought to be always in a *habit* of thankfulneſs, and in a readineſs for *actual* thankſgiving, whenever providence calls us to it. We muſt ſet the Lord always before us, contemplate his continual providence, and our abſolute dependence, maintain a ſerene, cheerful, contented mind, and baniſh from our hearts all thoſe malignant paſſions and worldly tempers, which are contrary to a ſpirit of gratitude; ſuch as envy, malice, pride, ambition and avarice. If we would live in a thankful temper, we muſt walk by faith in unſeen things, have our converſation in heaven, be at peace among ourſelves, and put on charity toward all men. The neceſſity of a friendly, ſocial and charitable Spirit, in order to the exerciſe of real thankfulneſs, the Apoſtle clearly expreſſes in his exhortation to the Coloſſians. "Put on bowels of mercies, kindneſs,



humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, longſuffering—and above all theſe things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectneſs; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, and *be ye thankful.*

Thankſgiving ſhould find a place in all our ſtated addreſſes to God. We are commanded to "pray without ceaſing." The expreſſion alludes to the daily ſacrifice which was offered morning and evening continually. As we are to pray always with all prayer, ſo we are to offer the ſacrifice of praiſe continually. This muſt be a part of our morning and evening oblation every day. "Be careful for nothing," ſays the Apoſtle, "but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known to God." Whenever we approach the throne of God, we ſhould bring thither hearts enlarged with gratitude for the things we enjoy, as well as with deſires of the things we need. "Every day," ſays the Pſalmiſt, "will I bleſs thee; I will praiſe thy name for ever and ever. It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, to ſing praiſes to thy name, O Moſt High, to ſhew forth thy loving kindneſs in the morning, and thy faithfulneſs every night."

All ſpecial favors ſhould be diſtinctly obſerved and acknowledged. God daily loads us with benefits." "Many are the wonderful works which he has done, and his thoughts, which are to us ward; they cannot be reckoned up in order to him; if we would declare and ſpeak of them, they are more than can be numbered." But there are, in every man's life, and perhaps in every year, ſome remarkable interpoſitions of God—ſome ſeaſonable protections and deliverances, ſupplies and comforts, directions and reſtraints, which cannot be wholly unnoticed, and which ought to be always remembered. If for ſuch as theſe we give thanks explicitly, and exerciſe a general gratitude for ben-

efits which cannot be recollected, we then give thanks always.

We ſhould be thankful in every condition. Proſperity ſhould not diſſipate, nor adverſity drown a ſenſe of our obligations to God. When we receive evil, we alſo receive good at his hands. And the good becomes more conſpicuous, when it is placed over againſt the evil. God has ſet the one over againſt the other, that man might find nothing after him. "Though the figtree ſhall not bloſſom," ſays the prophet, "neither ſhall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my ſalvation."

We ſhould never ceaſe to give thanks. "While I live," ſays the Pſalmiſt, "I will praiſe the Lord, I will ſing praiſes to my God, while I have any being. Becauſe thy loving kindneſs is better than life, my lips ſhall praiſe thee; thus will I bleſs thee, while I live. Every day will I praiſe thy name, I will bleſs thee for ever and ever."

IV. We will next conſider the *matters* for which we are to give thanks. Theſe are *all things*.

Walk forth in a cloudleſs evening; look up to the ſkies, and attempt to number the ſtars. Where will you begin? How will you proceed? You gaze and wonder at the ſcene. The objects ſoon loſe their diſtinction. They are mingled in a general blaze.

Such was the ſtate of the Apoſtle's mind. He recommends the duty, preſcribes the manner, and delineates the temper of thankſgiving; but the matters admit no detail. They baffle the power of numbers. It can only be ſaid, "Give thanks for *all things*."

David, bringing his thankoffering before God, begins his addreſs with this remarkable expreſſion,



"Praiſe waiteth," or praiſe is *ſilent*, "for thee, O God, in Zion." It is as if he had ſaid, "Such is thine inconceivable excellency and unbounded goodneſs—ſuch is the countleſs multitude of thy mercies, that, when we attempt thy praiſe, our tongues faulter, our devotion ſinks under the weight of the ſubject. We cannot expreſs; we ſilently adore thy glories."

"Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can ſhew forth all his praiſe?"—How precious are thy thoughts unto us, O God? How great is the ſum of them? If I ſhould count them, they are more in number than the ſand."—"I will hope continually: I will praiſe thee more and more; I will ſhew forth thy righteouſneſs and thy ſalvation all the day, for I know not the number thereof."

Take a review of your life from the early period of youth. How kindly have you been ſuſtained? How bountifully have your wants been ſupplied? How often have dangers been prevented, afflictions ſhortened, temptations diverted, diſappointments turned to ſucceſs, and imagined evils made productive of real good?

Look around on your neighbors, and ſee what bleſſings attend them. For theſe bleſſings give thanks. Their charity will impart to you a ſhare in the good they enjoy; and your benevolence may appropriate the whole. While you rejoice in another's proſperity, you divide it with him. You take the better half. Yours is pure and refined: The groſſer part is left to him.

Bleſſings beſtowed on others are for your ſake as well as theirs. How often has your thirſt been relieved by ſtreams from the fountain of the rich? How often has your heart been cheered by the ſmiles of the contented and happy? How often have your good reſolutions been ſtrengthened by

the counſels of the wife and the example of the virtuous?

Contemplate the benefits of civil ſociety. You partake in the national peace, plenty, proſperity and happineſs. Under the protection of a righteous government you ſit ſecurely in your houſe, ſleep undiſturbed in your bed, go forth into your field without danger of an enemy, walk the ſtreets without fear of an aſſaſſin, and lay up the fruits of your labor without concern that thieves will break through and ſteal.

Conſider your religious privileges. The goſpel of the ſon of God, which is in your hands, opens to your view moſt aſtoniſhing glories in the future world—glories which eye had not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor human heart imagined. It marks the path to heaven by the plaineſt precepts, and encourages your progreſs by the moſt gracious promiſes. And though darkneſs may ſometimes ſurround you, yet light ſoon ariſes in obſcurity.—Though the diſpenſations of God ſeem myſterious, yet all things are working for good to them who love him. They are heirs of his kingdom; they ſhall inherit all things.

What is there, then, for which the good man may not give thanks? All things are his. No real good will be withheld. Nothing will ſeparate him from the love of God.

V. We are now to conſider the *medium* of our acceſs to God in this duty, "The name of Jeſus Chriſt."

God putteth no truſt in his ſaints; the heavens are not clean in his ſight. How much leſs man that is a worm—man that is a ſinner? We are not worthy to ſpeak to him in praiſe for the benefits which we receive—much leſs to aſk of him farther benefits—leaſt of all to receive the benefits which we aſk. We are therefore directed not only to pray, but alſo to give thanks in the name of Chriſt,

who has purchaſed by his blood the bleſſings which we need, who has opened for us by his interceſſion, a way of acceſs to the throne of grace, and through whom alone, ſuch guilty creatures can acceptably draw near to God. "Jeſus Chriſt is the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by him." "Whatever, therefore we do, in word or deed, we muſt do all in his name, praying and giving thanks to God, even the Father by him."

We have taken a view of the important duty of thankſgiving. And we ſee, that this is not a work merely for one day in a year, but for every day that we live. We muſt give thanks always.

Let us not imagine, that by recounting a few remarkable favors, we have diſcharged our obligations to God; we are to give thanks for all things.

Let us not think, that to appear publicly in God's houſe and to feed plentifully at our tables, is the eſſence of thankſgiving; we muſt bring to God the offering of grateful hearts, feel a ſenſe of his goodneſs and our unworthineſs, exerciſe repentance for our ſins, devote ourſelves to him to walk in newneſs of life, and do good, and communicate to one another, as there is occaſion. With ſuch ſacrifices God is well pleaſed.

Nature itſelf points out our obligation to thankſgiving. Being endued with reaſon and ſpeech, we are capable of obſerving the merciful works of God, and of expreſſing the grateful and admiring ſentiments of our hearts. David calls his tongue his glory, becauſe with this he could praiſe his Creator. "My heart is fixed; I will ſing and give praiſe with my glory." The Apoſtle exhorts us to "offer unto God the fruit of the lips, giving thanks to his name."

Even ſinners love thoſe who love them; and do good to thoſe, who do good to them. This is natural. Hence the unthankful are ranked among

thoſe who are without natural affection. If gratitude to one another is a dictate of nature, ſhall not reaſon and religion lead up our hearts to God?

The ox knows his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib. Shall not we conſider and acknowledge him who has nouriſhed and brought us up as children?

The creation around us, gives us lectures on thankfulneſs, and exhibits the propriety of making returns for benefits. The rivers diſcharge into the ſea the waters which they derive from it. The ſkies remit in copious ſhowers the collections which they exhale from the earth in vapors. The fields by a fruitful increaſe repay the huſbandman's toil, and bring forth herbs meet for thoſe by whom they are dreſſed. All nature ſubſiſts by an interchange of kindneſſes. Harmony and order are the beauty of the natural world. Piety and benevolence are the beauty of the moral world.

If we are dependent upon God and every good gift comes from him—if we are ſinners under a forfeiture of all his favors—if we have done nothing to deſerve, and can do nothing to remunerate his benefits, but all proceed from his ſelf moving love; then we muſt be eternally bound to render praiſe to his name. What ſhall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? We will offer him the ſacrifice of thankſgiving.

Praiſe is pleaſant, as well as comely. Prayer reminds us of our wants, confeſſion wounds us with a ſenſe of guilt. But praiſe refreſhes the ſoul with the memory of God's exceeding goodneſs, and brings to view the happy circumſtances of our condition. "O, taſte and ſee that the Lord is good: Bleſſed is the man who truſteth in him."

What more delightful ſentiments can fill our ſouls, than ſuch as theſe? The great ruler of the univerſe graciouſly regards us and daily watches over us, makes us the ſubjects of a thouſand bleſ-



ſings, and employs us as agents to ſcatter his bounties among our fellow creatures; admits us into his preſence, and allows us to converſe with him; imparts his influence to direct our way, and gives us his grace to prepare us for heaven.

Thankſgiving is better than prayer and confeſſion, for it will never fail. When all our ſins are purged away by divine grace, and all our wants are ſwallowed up in the divine fulneſs—when we dwell in God's preſence, where is joy ſupreme, and ſit at his right hand where are pleaſures never failing, there will be no more occaſion for penitent confeſſion of ſin, ſtrong cries for mercy, and groanings which cannot be uttered. The glories of divine wiſdom, grace and love will be all our theme—gratitude and praiſe will be all our devotion.

Habitual thankfulneſs adds much to the happineſs of life. This ſoftens our cares, lightens our troubles, mitigates our griefs, diſpels our gloom, brightens up the ſoul, and ſmoothes the temper into ſerenity and cheerfulneſs. Ingratitude is ſullen, moroſe and peeviſh; it gives a diſreliſh to every favor, and increaſes the ſmart of every affliction.

Praiſe has been the work of ſaints on earth, and is the employment of angels in heaven. Let us therefore give thanks always, for all things, to God through Jeſus Chriſt, that we may now be prepared, and hereafter admitted to join with happy ſpirits above, in aſcribing bleſſing, and honor, and glory, and power, and thankſgiving to him who ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.

SERMON XLIII.

EPHESIANS v. 21.

Submitting yourſelves one to another in the fear of God.

THE Apoſtle, having exhorted the Epheſian Chriſtians to the duties of ſocial worſhip, next paſſes to inculcate ſeveral relative duties.—This ſubject he begins with a general exhortation to all Chriſtians to "ſubmit themſelves one to another." His ſubjoining *this* to his exhortation concerning ſocial worſhip, intimates, that one great uſe of joint devotion is the promotion of peace, humility and condeſcenſion.

This ſubmiſſion to others can no farther be a duty, than it is conſiſtent with our obligations to God. Therefore the Apoſtle ſays, "Submit yourſelves one to another *in the fear of God.*" "The wiſdom which is from above, is firſt *pure*, and then peaceable." The Chriſtian, who is bought with a price, muſt not be a ſervant of men. The ſenſe of our text is fully explained by other parallel inſtructions. "Ye younger, ſubmit yourſelves to the elder, and be ye all ſubject one to another, and be clothed with humility." "Let nothing be done through ſtrife and vain glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem other better than himſelf."—

"With brotherly love in honor prefer one another."

This temper was exemplified and recommended by our Lord, when he waſhed his diſciples feet, and inſtructed them to waſh one another's feet.—He tells us, that in his kingdom the oſtentatious diſtinctions, ſo common in the world, ſhall be unknown; that in point of obligation to juſtice and charity, all ſhall ſtand on a level, with only ſuch difference as ariſes from their reſpective abilities: That the higheſt in office and condition ſhall claim no other preeminence, than a ſuperior obligation to uſefulneſs. This is his meaning when he ſays, "The kings of the Gentiles exerciſe lordſhip over them, and they who exerciſe authority upon them, are called benefactors: But ye ſhall not be ſo; but he that is greateſt among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth ſerve; even as the Son of man came not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter."

Among men God diſpenſes his bleſſings with a ſovereign hand; to ſome he gives more, and to others leſs. But no man is exalted to a ſtate of independence. They who are in higheſt authority, and in moſt affluent condition, whatever pride they may feel in themſelves, and whatever envy others may feel toward them, are really as dependent as helpleſs, and as incapable of ſubſiſting by themſelves, as the pooreſt of the human race; yea, more ſo, for they are leſs able to endure the hardſhips and perform the labors of life. And it ought to be remembered, that in the continual fluctuation of human affairs, the rich and the poor may exchange conditions; and the former be reduced to ſuch impotence, as to need the help of thoſe whom now they deſpiſe.

This diverſity among men diſplays the ſovereignty, wiſdom and goodneſs of God; reminds us of our conſtant dependence; renders us mutually

uſeful; and gives opportunity for the exerciſe of many virtues, for which in a ſtate of equality there would be no room.

The duties which we owe to one another in this diverſity of rank and condition, our Apoſtle expreſſes by mutual ſubmiſſion. This will beſt be illuſtrated by conſidering it in the different relations of life.

1. It will eaſily be perceived that a degree of ſubmiſſion is due to *ſuperiors*. Particularly,

You muſt reverence your ſuperiors in *age*, not treat them with inſolence, or aſſume an impudent familiarity; but pay a reſpectful deference to their hoary hairs, long experience, grave deportment and ſedate advice. "Thou ſhalt riſe up before the hoary head," ſays Moſes, "and honor the face of the old man." It is a proof of great depravity, when "the youth behaves himſelf proudly againſt the ancient, and the baſe againſt the honorable."

To ſuperiors in *knowledge* and *wiſdom* you muſt ſhew ſubmiſſion, by conſulting them in your doubts and paying reſpect to their judgment. And if you ſee reaſon to diſſent from them, let it be done, not with haughty aſſurance, but with modeſt caution.

Honor a *pious* and *virtuous* character, wherever you ſee it; whether in the rich or poor, in the learned or illiterate. Never attempt to detract from it, but place it before you for your imitation, and propoſe it to others for theirs.

Obey your ſuperiors in *authority*. Cheerfully ſubmit to their juſt commands, and by your peaceable behavior ſupport and extend their influence. Though in civil ſociety, legitimate authority originates from the people, yet when they have in any form, conſented to lodge certain powers in the hands of particular perſons, theſe perſons then become their ſuperiors, and are entitled to their obe-

dience and ſupport in the execution of the powers committed to them. Every attempt to control or embarraſs officers of government in the diſcharge of their duty, is an offence againſt nature and ſociety, reaſon and chriſtianity.

2. Mutual ſubjection may be conſidered, as it reſpects *equals*.

All men have the ſame immutable right to an equitable treatment from all with whom they have intercourſe. The poor man has as good a claim to juſtice from the rich, as the rich man has from the poor—the private citizen from the magiſtrate, as the magiſtrate from the private citizen. This mutual ſubmiſſion implies, that every man ſhould do juſtice to every man with whom he is concerned; ſhould treat his perſon with humanity, his character with tenderneſs, his conduct with candor, and his ſubſtance with equity.

All men, as far as their condition requires, are alike entitled to compaſſion and aſſiſtance from thoſe around them. We are to relieve the unhappy, ſupply the needy, ſupport the weak, vindicate the injured, as far as our ability will extend, and our other obligations will juſtify. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt."

Equals muſt preſerve an affable and obliging deportment; rather decline, than aſſume a preeminence—rather yield than affect a ſuperiority. "Love as brethren; be pitiful; be courteous—in honor prefer one another."

This Spirit is peculiarly beautiful and pleaſant, when it runs through ſocieties, and unites all the parts into one compact whole. Then each member ſeeks the profit of many in preference to his own; cheerfully yields to his brethren the preeminence, rejoices in their diſtinguiſhed merits; and ſtudies to riſe, not on their ruin, but on his own virtue and uſefulneſs.

Mutual ſubjection ought eſpecially to be ſeen in families. The ſubordinate members ſhould dwell together in unity, and by love ſerve one another. The heads ſhould conſider themſelves as one in intereſt, and ſhould act as having one Spirit; not enter into conteſts for ſuperiority, undermine each other's influence and deſtroy domeſtic government; but, by mutual condeſcenſion and prudent concurrence, ſtrengthen each other's hands and promote the common happineſs. All points ſhould be carried by cool advice and gentle perſuaſion; not by pertinacious contradiction and unyielding oppoſition. Thus "two are better than one, for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow."

3. There is a ſubmiſſion due to thoſe, who, on ſome accounts, may be deemed our *inferiors*.

The ſame perſon may, in different relations, be to the ſame perſon both a ſuperior and an inferior. Solomon, as *king* of Iſrael, was ſuperior to his mother: As a *ſon* he was her inferior. In the *natural* relation he owed reverence to *her*: In the *civil* relation ſhe owed obedience to *him*. When ſhe interceded with the king for Adonijah, ſhe made her motion, not with the authority of a parent, but with the duty of a ſubject. And when ſhe came into his preſence, he received her, not as an ordinary ſubject, but as a parent. He roſe up to meet her, bowed himſelf to her, and ſeated her on his right hand.

Farther: Superiors as ſuch owe a reſpect to thoſe who are below them. They ſhould be eaſy of acceſs, gentle in their language and condeſcending in their deportment. Rulers are to be miniſters of God for good to the people for whom they act—the rich are to diſtribute to the needy—the ſtrong are to bear the infirmities of the weak—every one is to pleaſe his neighbors for their good to edification.

4. This mutual ſubmiſſion ought to appear in Chriſtian *churches*. It is to the members of the E-

pheſian church, that this advice is addreſſed; and all in that particular character are bound to apply it.

Chriſt has inſtituted a government in his kingdom; but it is a ſoft and perſuaſive, not a violent and compulſive government. "God is not the author of confuſion, but of peace in all churches of the ſaints.

There is need of mutual ſubmiſſion between *miniſters* and the *people* of their charge.

Miniſters are in ſome reſpects to be ſubject to their people. They are not lords over God's heritage. They have no dominion over any man's faith and conſcience. They are to be ſervants of all men, examples to believers and helpers of their joy. Within the ſphere of their office they have an authority; but it is an authority given for edification only; not for deſtruction. They are to labor, not for their own private emolument, but for the ſalvation of others; and to be made all things to all men, that by all means they may ſave ſome. They muſt not, indeed, ſeek to pleaſe men by ſervile compliances and temporizing arts. If they thus pleaſe men, they are not the ſervants of Chriſt. They may no farther accommodate themſelves to men, than is conſiſtent with their being under the law to God.

They are to feed the flock of God—that flock eſpecially over which the Holy Ghoſt has made them overſeers. And while they find ſupport and encouragement in this ſervice, they are not to relinquiſh it for worldly honors and emoluments, nor to neglect it for the indulgence of eaſe, or the acquiſition of lucre. They are to abide in their calling; to be quiet and do their own buſineſs; not to forſake their charge, and ramble abroad under pretence of ſerving other churches, and doing more extenſive good.

On the other hand, there are duties which people owe to their miniſters. Theſe duties you will find clearly ſtated by St. Paul. "Know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you. Eſteem them very highly in love for their works ſake."—"Obey them who have the rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves, for they watch for your ſouls."—"Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things."—"The Lord hath ordained that they who preach the goſpel, ſhould live of the goſpel." Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free courſe."

As miniſters are not lords over Chriſt's heritage, ſo you are not blindly to follow their opinions, not implicitly to obey their mandates. "Call no man your maſter on earth, for one is your maſter, even Chriſt." There is, however, a ſubmiſſion which you owe them. You are to eſteem them in their office, and regard them as ſervants of Chriſt, and your ſervants for his ſake. You may never haſtily receive, nor raſhly propagate an accuſation againſt them, which might injure their character, or obſtruct their uſefulneſs; but you muſt ſupport their juſt reputation both as miniſters and as men.

As they are called to labor among you in word and doctrine, you muſt attend on their miniſtrations with diligence, and receive the word from them with meekneſs, and be cautious that you impede not its influence on your own hearts by a cavilling humor, and hinder not its effect on others by captious objections.

As they are to warn the unruly, and rebuke open tranſgreſſors, ſo you muſt apply their admonitions as far as they are pertinent to your own caſe, and aid the juſt operations of them on all concerned.

As they are to inſtruct and convince gainſayers, ſo, when you hear from them a doctrine diverſe from your former ſentiments, you are to examine it without prejudice; and, if the evidence of truth is on their ſide, ſubmit with joy to the correction of your miſtakes. If, on the contrary, you conclude them to be in an error, traduce them not as heretics; talk not againſt them by the walls and in the doors of your houſes; but ſtate to *them* the grounds of your diſſatisfaction, and by friendly conference, labor to rectify *their* miſtake, or to ſee *your own.*

As they are ambaſſadors for Chriſt, ſent to open the terms of peace, ſubmit to theſe terms, and become reconciled to God.

Pray for them, that utterance may be given them to ſpeak the word boldly, as they ought to ſpeak. Treat them with ſuch kindneſs, that they may be among you without fear, while they work the work of God. And as they communicate to you ſpiritual things, impart to them temporal things in ſuch manner, that they may purſue this work without interruption. If religious knowledge is conveyed by the word which they preach; if ſpiritual ſtrength is increaſed by the ordinances which they adminiſter; if God has conſtituted them as guides to lead you in the way to heaven, as paſtors to feed you, as watchmen to warn you, and as ſtewards to diſpenſe his gifts among you; there is then every reaſon why you ſhould honor them in their office, ſubmit to them in the execution of it, and pray for them, that the word of God may be glorified.

There ought to be a mutual ſubmiſſion among the *members* of the church. For there is an authority given to all collectively over each particular member. The church is to inſpect, exhort, admoniſh and cenſure her members, as their caſes may require; and each member is to conſider

himſelf as under her diſcipline both by his own covenant and by Chriſt's command; and to this diſcipline he is bound peaceably to ſubmit, as far as it is adminiſtered agreeably to the goſpel.

Chriſtians are to conſider one another, that they may provoke unto love and good works—to ſtudy the things which make for the common edification and comfort, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. They ſhould not withdraw themſelves from the church for every cauſe, either for ſuppoſed errors in it, for perſonal diſlike to the paſtor, or for diſguſt at a diſcipline, which affects them or their particular friends; but ſhould rather labor by goſpel means to remove the cauſe of their offence, and to preſerve the general peace.

In order to this mutual *ſubmiſſion*, there muſt be a Spirit of *humility*. Theſe St. Peter places in connexion. "Be ye all *ſubject* one to another, and be clothed with *humility*." This will diſpoſe Chriſtians to think ſoberly of their own knowledge and goodneſs, and in honor to prefer one another. An undue opinion of themſelves is the cauſe of all their aſſuming behavior. It is this, that makes them treat ſuperiors with inſolence, equals with rudeneſs and inferiors with contempt. It is this that makes them forward to dictate, and backward to be adviſed; obſtinate in their own ways and impatient of control; confident in their own opinions and deaf to the voice of reaſon. It is this that makes them create imaginary, and overrate real injuries; reſentful of reproof, and ſcornful of inſtruction. This is the main ſource of contentions, and the greateſt bar to reconciliation.

A humble view of ourſelves will produce quite contrary effects. This will make us ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, open to conviction, ready to retract our errors and confeſs our faults, free to receive advice, and prompt to acknowledge a kindneſs. This will lead us to give honor where it is due, to

condeſcend to men of low eſtate, to bear the infirmities of the weak, and to follow peace with all men.

Religion begins in humbleneſs of mind—in a conviction of our own guilt and unworthineſs. In this conviction we muſt apply to the mercy of God in the name of Jeſus for pardon, grace and glory. In this humble application of the ſoul to God, through a mediator, conſiſts true and ſaving faith. Faith is a meek, ſubmiſſive, peaceable grace. It begins in a ſight of ourſelves as ſinners, and in a view of Chriſt as a gracious and ſufficient Savior. The life of the Chriſtian is by the faith of the Son of God; and this faith operates to increaſing humility, condeſcenſion and love. The nearer he keeps to Chriſt, the more he will learn from him, and the more he will be aſſimilated to him who is meek and lowly. The ſtronger is his faith, the deeper will be his humiliation, and the more ardent and diffuſive his love. "Let us therefore purify our ſouls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren; and love one another with a pure heart fervently, as becomes thoſe who are born of incorruptible ſeed, even by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

SERMON XLIV.

EPHESIANS v. 22——33.

Wives ſubmit yourſelves to your own huſbands as unto the Lord; for the huſband is the head of the wife, even as Chriſt is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is ſubject to Chriſt, ſo let the wives be to their own huſbands in every thing.

Huſbands, love your wives, even as Chriſt alſo loved the church, and gave himſelf for it, that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word, that he might preſent it to himſelf a glorious church, not having ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing, but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies:—He that loveth his wife loveth himſelf;—for no man ever yet hated his own fleſh, but nouriſheth and cheriſheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his fleſh and of his bones. For this cauſe ſhall a man leave his father and his mother, and ſhall be joined to his wife, and they two ſhall be one fleſh. This is a great myſtery;

but I ſpeak concerning Chriſt and the church. Nevertheleſs, let every one of us in particular ſo love his wife, even as himſelf; and the wife ſee that ſhe reverence her huſband.

THE Apoſtle having, in the preceding part of this epiſtle, ſtated and inculcated the various duties, which Chriſtians more generally owe to one another, comes now to the conſideration of the relative and domeſtic duties.

In the words juſt read, he particularly explains and powerfully urges the duties of the conjugal relation.

As this is the firſt, ſo it is the moſt important relation, that ever exiſted in the human race; and the obligations ariſing from it, ought to be ſeriouſly conſidered and ſacredly regarded. The happineſs of the relation, its uſefulneſs to civil and religious ſociety, the honor of the family, the education of children, and the intereſt of religion in the world, much depend on the prudent and faithful diſcharge of the duties which the huſband and wife owe to each other. Of theſe duties, there is no paſſage in ſcripture, which gives a clearer view than this before us. But while we attend to this, we ſhall naturally introduce other paſſages relative to the ſame ſubject.

You will here obſerve,

That there are ſome duties which theſe correlates owe to each other in common.

That there are ſome particularly incumbent on the wife toward her huſband. And,

That there are ſome eſpecially incumbent on the huſband toward his wife.

Theſe ſeveral obligations I ſhall explain; and ſhall alſo apply in their place the arguments which the apoſtle uſes to enforce them.

I. I begin with thoſe which are common to both the correlates.

The huſband and wife are, in ſome reſpects, *equals.* Hence there are ſeveral duties alike incumbent on both. The Apoſtle, alluding to the union of the firſt pair, and to the firſt inſtitution of marriage, ſays, "A man ſhall leave his father and mother, and ſhall be joined to his wife, and they two ſhall be *one fleſh.*"

This relation is founded in mutual conſent; and the conſent does, or ought to proceed from mutual affection, and to be preſerved by mutual kindneſs.

As theſe relatives are one, and have one common intereſt, they ought to act with an undivided concern for the happineſs of the family.

Being one fleſh, they are to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life. The huſband is not to put away his wife, nor ſhe to depart from him.

They are alike bound to mutual fidelity and a chaſte converſation. They are to avoid, not only the groſs violations of the conjugal vow, but that light behavior and wanton language, which indicate an impure mind, or which might inſenſibly transfer the affections to an unlawful object, or create the ſuſpicion of a wandering deſire.

They are under equal obligations to ſtudy each other's peace and comfort, to take part in each other's pains and diſtreſſes, to aſſiſt in each other's duties and ſervices, and to ſupport each other's reputation and honor. Every thing of this kind is compriſed in the Apoſtle's direction, "To render to each other due benevolence."

The inſtruction and education of their children and domeſtics; the giving and receiving of ſeaſonable advice; and praying with and for one another, are duties common to both, and implied in that expreſſion of St. Peter, "that they live together as

heirs of the grace of life, that ſo their prayers may not be hindered."

II. There are ſome duties peculiarly incumbent on the wife. Theſe the Apoſtle expreſſes by the terms *ſubmiſſion, reverence, obedience* and *ſubjection.*

"Wives ſubmit yourſelves to your own huſbands, as unto the Lord—for the huſband is the head of the wife, as Chriſt is the head of the church. As the church is ſubject to Chriſt, ſo let the wives be to their huſbands in every thing. Let the wife ſee, that ſhe reverence her huſband."

He cannot intend, that the wife in every thing ſhould yield an implicit obedience to her huſband, as the church to Chriſt; but only that ſhe ſhould be ſubject to him in all things agreeable to the will of Chriſt. So he ſtates her obedience in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians, "Wives ſubmit yourſelves to your own huſbands, as is fit in the Lord."

The huſband, though the head of the wife, is not to treat her as a menial ſervant, and exact from her an unlimited ſubjection. This is to aſſume an authority, which Chriſt has not communicated to him. Both ſhould act, as having one ſoul, and combine their influence in the government of the houſehold. But when there happens a diverſity of ſentiment, and neither can impart conviction, the obligation to recede, doubtleſs lies firſt on the woman.

The Apoſtle ſays, "The woman ought not to uſurp authority over the man, but to be in ſilence with all ſubjection." For this he aſſigns ſeveral reaſons. He ſays, "Adam was firſt formed, and then Eve." He therefore had a natural precedence. "The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man," being formed out of him, and made of his fleſh and bone. "Neither was the man created for the woman, but ſhe for the man," to be an help meet for him. "And Adam was not" firſt "deceived," and drawn into the apoſtacy, "but the

woman being deceived was" firſt "in the tranſgreſſion." For this cauſe God ordered, that "her deſire ſhould be to her huſband, and he ſhould rule over her."

But the reaſon alledged, in the text, for this ſubjection, is the example of the church. The firſt marriage was an emblem of the union between Chriſt and his church. As the woman was bone of man's bone, and fleſh of his fleſh, ſo "we are members of Chriſt's body, of his fleſh and of his bones." And the ancient inſtitution, "They two ſhall be one fleſh," was a myſtical repreſentation of this ſpiritual relation.

Now ſince the church is ſubject to Chriſt, the woman ought to be ſubject to her huſband, who, by Chriſt's authority, is conſtituted her head.

A family ſhould reſemble a church in union, peace and ſubordination. In a church there could be no edification, if there were no government;—neither in a family could there be order, if there were no head. Either of them, without rule, muſt be diſſolved, or live in perpetual diſcord. Chriſt is the head of the church; and all its members are bound to obey the government which he has inſtituted. The huſband, under him, is ruler in his own houſe; and when he governs it according to the laws of Chriſt, all the members are to be ſubject to him. Thus the family will become a little church; and, being edified in knowledge and virtue, will grow into a meetneſs to join the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born, whoſe names are written in heaven.

The honor and intereſt of religion require, that wives, by a cheerful ſubordination, cooperate with their huſbands in all the important concerns of the houſehold, and in the nurture, education and government of the dependent members. Hence this direction of Paul to Titus, "Charge them to be ſober, to reſpect their huſbands, to love their chil-

dren, to be diſcreet, chaſte, keepers at home, good, obedient to their huſbands, that the word of God be not blaſphemed;" or that the goſpel be not reproached among Heathens by means of the confuſions and diſorders in chriſtian families. We proceed,

III. To conſider the duties of huſbands to their wives. Theſe the Apoſtle expreſſes by the word LOVE.

Under this word he compriſes all thoſe kind offices, which love, in ſo intimate and tender a connexion, will naturally dictate. Love here ſtands oppoſed to ſharpneſs and ſeverity. "Huſbands, love your wives, and be not bitter againſt them." —Though the wife, by the order of creation, the manner of the apoſtacy, and the injunctions of the goſpel, is bound to obey; yet the huſband is not warranted to exerciſe an arbitrary authority. He is to maintain his ſuperiority with gentleneſs, always conſidering his wife as his aſſociate, cloſely allied to him by the ſtrongeſt bonds of friendſhip and intereſt. "He muſt not be bitter againſt her." This is a metaphor taken from the diſguſt excited by bitter objects of taſte. He ſhould not, by a peeviſh, moroſe and haughty carriage, render himſelf ungrateful and offenſive to her, like wormwood to the mouth. He ſhould not be provoked to wrath, averſion and upbraiding by her trivial imperfections and accidental failings, as the ſtomach is provoked to diſguſt by loathſome food. The near connexion between the parties renders that language and behavior bitter, which, in other circumſtances, would be indifferent. The malice of an enemy may make little impreſſion, when the coldneſs of a friend would be deeply felt. Ill uſage from a ſtranger may excite anger; but from a near relative it awakens the tendereſt ſenſations of grief. What chiefly wounds in ſuch caſes is the defeat of our expectations. We love, and

would be beloved; we eſteem, and would be eſteemed. But failing of theſe returns, we are afflicted and diſconſolate. The reaſon why harſh words and unkind uſage are ſo peculiarly grievous in near relations, is becauſe they are ſo little expected, and ſo entirely unmerited. The mind is full of other hopes, and is ſurprized to find them deceived.—— When, inſtead of gentleneſs, condeſcenſion and affability, the wife only meets with ſullen reſerve, or ungenerous upbraidings, her tender feelings are deeply wounded. A tongue thus whet is keener than a ſword. Such ſharpened words pierce deeper than an arrow.

The Apoſtle Peter directs the huſband "to dwell with the wife according to knowledge, giving honor to her, as to the weaker veſſel"—to treat her with lenity and ſoftneſs, as veſſels of finer mould and weaker contexture muſt be handled with care and tenderneſs—to regard her as an intimate friend—to ſupport her authority in the houſehold—to protect her perſon from inſults—to uphold her reputation—to feel for her pains and injuries—to place confidence in her diſcretion and fidelity—and to render her condition eaſy and happy.

"Whoever conſiders to what peculiar difficulties and trials God has ſubjected this part of the human ſpecies, both by the tenderneſs of their frame, and by the lot aſſigned them, will ſee himſelf bound to treat his wife with gentleneſs, and to ſuſtain her under all her infirmities. And if he farther conſiders, of what uſe ſuch a friend is in all the changes of life—what ſolace in health, comfort in ſickneſs, and relief in diſtreſs her good offices afford him—and what peculiar burdens fall to her ſhare in the nurture and education of children, he will find himſelf bound, in point of juſtice and gratitude, to ſtudy her happineſs; and will feel the propriety of thoſe divine precepts, which require

him to love his wife, and give her honor as the more tender veſſel."

But this brings me, to conſider the reaſons alledged why the huſband ſhould love his wife.

One argument is the example of Chriſt. "Huſbands, love your wives, as Chriſt loved the church."

One end of Chriſt's appearance in the fleſh was to ſet us an example of our duty. As he never ſuſtained the tender domeſtic relations, he could not exhibit a direct example of the duties reſulting from them. But then his relation to the church is ſo ſimilar to that ſubſiſting between huſband and wife, that the latter is often compared to, and illuſtrated by the former. He is called the bridegroom, and his church the bride. Hence his love to the church is improved as an argument to enforce on huſbands the duties which they owe to their wives.

Having mentioned the love of Chriſt, the Apoſtle ſo ſtrongly feels the argument, that he expatiates and enlarges upon it. "Chriſt, loved the church and gave himſelf for it." Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but Chriſt commended his love toward us, in that, while we were enemies, he died for us. He has purchaſed for himſelf a church with his own blood. He has redeemed her from bondage, introduced her into a ſtate of freedom, and admitted her to an intimate communion with himſelf.

He gave himſelf for the church, "that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word." The great end for which he brings us into the church is, that we might be ſanctified. In order to our ſanctification, he has appointed his word and ordinances, which we are to attend upon with this view. The work of the Spirit in our ſanctification is not immediate, but by his word and ordinances. And it is only in our attendance on theſe, that we obtain his ſanctifying grace. Do not then imagine, that you ought to abſent your-

ſelves from the church, until you are ſanctified—that you are firſt to become holy, and afterward to attend on the inſtitutions of Chriſt as evidences that you are holy. But remember that "Chriſt gave himſelf for the church, that he might cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word, and thus finally preſent it to himſelf a glorious church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing."

In the preſent ſtate there will be ſome ſpots and wrinkles in the church. There will be in it ſome unſanctified members; and the ſaints themſelves will be ſanctified only in part. But in the future ſtate, the church will be perfectly cleanſed. Hypocrites will be utterly excluded, and the ſaints will be ſanctified wholly.

Chriſt has given his word and ordinances, that by them his body may be edified, and that we all may come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto perfect men, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt.

This example teaches us, that Chriſtians ought to love one another—to bear one another's burdens, forgive each other's offences, and aſſiſt each other in thoſe ſpiritual exerciſes, which are preparatives for heaven. It teaches us, that huſbands are eſpecially bound to love their wives, and, by ſuch kind offices, to expreſs their love to them. This is to love them, as Chriſt loved the church.

Another reaſon for this love in the conjugal relation is, that "whoſo loveth his wife, loveth himſelf." The parties are one fleſh, and have one intereſt; and "no man hates his own fleſh, but nouriſhes and cheriſhes it." Every diſhonor or injury, which a man does to ſo intimate a relative, recoils on himſelf. He muſt eventually ſuffer it. His peace, reputation and proſperity greatly depend on the virtue, diſcretion, ſerenity and contentment of his wife. If therefore he loves himſelf, he ought to love her, to bear her burdens, relieve her diſtreſs,

es, contribute to her cheerfulneſs, encourage her virtues, diſcover a ſatisfaction in her diſcreet behavior, and joyfully accept her friendly aſſiſtance in the government of the family, and in the management of their common concerns. In caſes of miſconduct, he ought not to upbraid with ſeverity, but to expoſtulate with tenderneſs. And in caſes of difference in opinion, he ought not to oppoſe with haughtineſs, but either to convince by reaſon, or diſſent with moderation.

The happineſs of a parent depends much on the virtuous manners of his children; and their virtue will greatly depend on union in the heads of the houſehold. This union can be preſerved only by a mild and diſcreet carriage toward each other. If the huſband is the head of the wife, the peace of the family will chiefly lie with him. If he expects ſubmiſſion from her, let him fill his ſuperior ſtation with ſuch virtue and wiſdom, as to obtain it without controverſy. Submiſſion is then moſt eaſily gained, when it is moſt obviouſly merited. If there is no prudence, dignity or virtue in the conduct of the man, he has little reaſon to expect, and leſs right to claim a cheerful obedience from his wife. —The man who acts worthily in his place at the head of a family, will ſeldom need to enter into a debate for ſuperior authority. It will uſually be yielded without reluctance.

The ſimilitude, which the Apoſtle here, and in divers other places, draws between a family and a church, ſuggeſts to us that religion, in every family, ſhould be an object of principal regard; for without this the reſemblance will not hold. It is only the religious huſband who governs his family, as Chriſt governs the church. It is only the religious wife, who obeys her huſband, as the church obeys Chriſt. Where the ſpirit of religion reigns in both, the union will be eaſy, and their joint government will have efficacy.

As a family ſhould reſemble a church, ſo it ought to be ſubordinate to the church; and the church ſhould aſſiſt in the government of it.

Parents ſhould early dedicate their children to Chriſt; for he has ſaid, "Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven." They ſhould educate their children for him and ſeek his bleſſing upon them. They ſhould inſtruct them in his religion and exemplify it to them in their own daily converſation. They ſhould aſſiſt their children in their devotions, and require their attendance on the ſtated worſhip of the family. And, when they arrive to proper age, parents ſhould encourage their approach to the ordinances of Chriſt in his church, that thereby they may be ſanctified and made meet for the church which is above.

If families were as little churches, the church would receive from them continual acceſſions; new members would be added to it, and Chriſt's houſe would be full.

The decline or revival of religion will uſually keep pace with the neglect or ſupport of family order and diſcipline. And the maintenance of family religion depends on nothing more than the union of the heads. If with them there is ſtrife and contention, the houſe will be filled with confuſion and every evil work. If they are divided in their opinions, and embittered in their feelings; if they look on each other with jealouſy and diſtruſt; if they frequently fall into paſſionate altercations and diſputes; if the wife pays no regard to her huſband's pleaſure, and he puts no confidence in her diſcretion; prayer will be hindered, or performed without devotion. For how can they unite in prayers and praiſes to God, who unite in nothing elſe, and are become more diſtant in affection, than if they never had been made one fleſh. How can they command obedience from their children, who

appear to have no government of themſelves?—How can they form their domeſtics to virtue, who exhibit an example inconſiſtent with virtue, and ſhew themſelves to be wanting in a moſt capital branch of religion?

Let us, then, who ſtand in this connexion, by reciprocal love and good offices honor our profeſſion and promote each other's happineſs, as being heirs together of the grace of life. Then our prayers will not be hindered.

SERMON XLV.

EPHESIANS vi. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the firſt commandment with promiſe, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayeſt live long on the earth. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

IN theſe words the Apoſtle ſtates the duty of children to their parents, and the duty of parents to their children.

We will conſider them diſtinctly. Firſt.

The Apoſtle addreſſes himſelf to *children* in an exhortation to obey and honor their parents. "Obey your parents in the Lord;" or in compliance with the command of the Lord, which ſays, "Honor thy father and mother." To enforce this exhortation he reminds children, that the command to "honor their parents," is diſtinguiſhed from the others by a particular promiſe of the divine favor. "This is the firſt commandment with promiſe."—The promiſe is, "Thou ſhalt live long on the earth." This promiſe the Apoſtle interprets, not as confined to temporal proſperity, nor yet as abſolutely inſuring long life; but as ſignifying in

general, that "it ſhall be well with them;" or that God will beſtow on them ſuch things, as his perfect wiſdom ſees to be beſt for them. "Obey your parents—for this is right." It is plainly reaſonable in itſelf and acceptable to God, that children, who are young and inexperienced, weak and dependent, ſhould honor and obey thoſe who naturally care for them, who are charged with their ſupport and education, and whoſe ſuperior wiſdom and riper experience, enable them to judge for their children better than children can judge for themſelves.

The obedience and honor; which children owe to their parents, compriſe ſeveral things, which are of great importance in this relation.

1. Children owe to their parents an inward *affection* and *regard*.

Their obedience ſhould flow from *love, gratitude* and *eſteem*.

Without a correſpondent principle in the heart, external tokens of honor are of little value. The love which parents bear to their children entitles them to reciprocal affection.

Conſider, you who are young, in what various ways your parents have expreſſed and continue ſtill to teſtify their regard for you. They have ſupplied the wants of your helpleſs infancy;—watched over the motives of your heedleſs childhood, and guided the ſteps of your giddy and unthinking youth. They have ſpared no pains to inform your minds and regulate your manners, to rear you to manhood, and mould you to virtue.—They have anxiouſly attended you in times of ſickneſs, and trembled for you in hours of danger. And your happy return to health and ſafety has filled their hearts with joy, and their mouths with praiſe. You, who have ſeen a brother or a ſiſter wrapt in the funeral ſhroud, have, at the ſame time, witneſſed the anguiſh of your parents. Such

would have been their anguiſh, had the ſame ſhroud embraced your cold limbs. How are they diſtreſſed, when, by your unworthy behavior, you bring ſhame and diſhonor on yourſelves! What pleaſure fills their ſouls, when they ſee you improving in knowledge and goodneſs, and riſing to reputation and eſteem! All their worldly labors and cares have your welfare and honor for their principal object. Their earthly hopes and proſpects are in you.

Can you, my young friends, think ſeriouſly on theſe inſtances of your parents regard and affection, and not feel yourſelves bound to return love for love? You love thoſe companions, who aſſociate with you in your amuſements and diverſions.—Can you be indifferent to your parents, who daily employ their time, ſtrength and thoughts in promoting your comfort and welfare, and in laying a foundation for your honor in this world, and your happineſs in the next?

If, at any time, you feel uneaſy under the reſtraints, which they lay upon you, conſider, whether they have not given you full proof of their benevolence; and believe that theſe reſtraints are kindly intended.

2. You are to *honor* your parents by external tokens of *reſpect*.

Solomon, though his regal dignity raiſed him ſuperior to all around him, yet forgot not the honor due to a parent. When his mother approached him, he roſe to meet her, and bowed himſelf to her, and placed her on his right hand.

The natural ſuperiority of your parents, and the important relation which they bear to you, oblige you to be ſubmiſſive in your carriage, dutiful in your manners, and reſpectful in all that you ſpeak to them in their preſence, or ſay concerning them in their abſence.

There is nothing which ſhocks us more, than to ſee a youth behave toward his parents with inſolence, or to hear him treat their characters with deriſion.

Never, my children, never expoſe the ſecret failings of a parent. You will thus bring diſhonor on yourſelves, and on the family. If, at any time, you ſhould have occaſion to mention ſome public inſtance of his miſconduct, ſpeak with prudent caution and tenderneſs—with filial grief and concern; not in a way of ridicule, mockery and contempt. The impiety of Ham in deriding his father's miſcarriage, brought on him a laſting curſe; while the filial dutifulneſs of the other ſons, in endeavoring to conceal his ſhame, entailed a bleſſing on them and their poſterity.

3. You are to *obey* the juſt commands of your parents.

"Obey your parents in the Lord." You are to honor God as ſupreme, and *them* in obedience to *him*. "If any man love father or mother more than me," ſays our Lord, "he is not worthy of me." If a parent ſhould enjoin any thing contrary to the will of God, you cannot be bound to obey: For the authority of God, and the obligations of virtue are always ſuperior to the commands of men. "Obey your parents *in all things*;" ſays the Apoſtle, "for this is well pleaſing to the Lord." You muſt make it your firſt aim to pleaſe God; and, in all things agreeable to his will, you muſt be obedient to them. In matters, of which you are not competent to form a judgment, you muſt ſubmit to their authority, and confide in their ſuperior wiſdom. If in theſe caſes you err, the error will be to them, not to you.

You ſhould obey them cheerfully, without complaining, or anſwering again—without evading or ſhifting off their orders. For this you have the example of Chriſt, who, in his youth, was ſubject

to his parents. There is a particular curſe denounced againſt the child, "whoſe eye mocketh at his father, and deſpiſeth to obey his mother."

4. You are not only to obey their expreſs commands, while you are under their authority, but to receive, with *decent* and *humble regard*, the inſtructions, counſels and reproofs, which they may ſee fit to communicate afterward. From their age and experience you may, perhaps, derive ſome real benefit, as long as they ſhall live. Though their authority will be ſuperſeded by your maturity, yet their affection for you and relation to you will be terminated only by death. Never, therefore, reject with contempt their grave advice or ſerious rebuke; but hear it with attention, examine it with calmneſs, apply and obey it, as far as reaſon will juſtify. "A wiſe ſon heareth a father's inſtruction; but a ſcorner heareth not rebuke. A fool deſpiſeth the inſtruction of his father; but he that regardeth reproof is prudent."

5. You are to *remember*, and, if there is occaſion, you are alſo to *remunerate* the favors, which you have received from your parents.

You muſt comfort and ſupport them under their infirmities, relieve the pains and lighten the burden of their declining years, and be the ſtaff of their tottering age. This is the inſtruction of Solomon; "Hearken unto thy father who begat thee, and deſpiſe not thy mother, when ſhe is old."—The Apoſtle ſays, "Let children learn to ſhew piety at home, and to requite their parents;" or make them a ſuitable return, when either poverty, age or infirmity calls for it; "for this is good and acceptable before God." An inſtance of this filial piety we have in Joſeph the governor of Egypt; who, in a time of general famine, ſent to his aged father in Canaan, ſaying, "Come down to me, tarry not—Thou ſhalt dwell near to me, and I will nouriſh thee." Another inſtance we have in Da-

vid: Perſecuted and driven from place to place by the malice of Saul, he felt an anxious concern for his parents, leſt the enemy unable to apprehend him, ſhould take vengeance on them: He therefore brings them into the land of Moab, and ſays to the king, "Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you, till I know what God will do for me." It was ſaid to Naomi, that Boaz, who had married her daughter, ſhould be "a reſtorer of her life, and a nouriſher of her old age." We have a higher example in our divine Savior, who, on the croſs, committed his aged mother to the care of John his beloved diſciple. In reproving the Scribes for their hypocriſy, our Lord mentions this as a moſt abominable inſtance of it, that, under pretence of piety to God, they abſolved men from their obligation to ſupport their aged parents. "Ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition; for Moſes ſaid, Honor thy father and mother; but ye teach, that if a man ſhall ſay to his father or mother, This is a gift," dedicated to God, "by whatſoever I might profit, or maintain thee, he ſhall be free from his obligation to do any thing for their ſupport."—Thus ſays he, "Ye make the word of God, of no effect."

You ſee, what are the principal duties which you owe to your parents.

For your encouragement in the performance of them, remember, that, to the command, "Honor your parents," God has added a promiſe, "It ſhall be well with you, and your lives ſhall be prolonged."

In all your temporal concerns you will enjoy the ſmiles of his providence; his favor will multiply your days, his bleſſing will proſper your labors, and his goodneſs will ſupply your wants. His eye will be upon you for good; his ear will be open to your prayers; and no good thing will he with-

hold from you. He will make the pious labors of your parents ſubſervient to your ſpiritual intereſt. Trained up by their prudent care, in the way of wiſdom, and led along by their counſel and example, you will find the path more and more pleaſant and inviting, as you proceed. Strengthened and animated by the power of God's grace, you will repel temptations and triumph over oppoſition; you will run and not be weary, you will walk and not faint. We proceed,

Secondly. To the other branch of our ſubject, which is, The duty of parents to their children.—"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; provoke them not, leſt they be diſcouraged; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is agreeable to the wiſe man's advice, "Train up a child in the way in which he ſhould go." It is illuſtrated in the example of Abraham, "who commanded his children and his houſehold after him, and they kept the way of the Lord."

Paul well underſtood human nature; he wiſely judged what kind of diſcipline in a houſehold would be moſt ſucceſsful. In both the epiſtles in which he treats on family government, he cautions parents not to diſcourage the hearts, and break the ſpirits of their children, by provoking their paſſions. It is a caution, which deſerves the attention of all, who are placed at the head of families. In theſe little ſocieties there muſt be government, as well as in larger; but it muſt be a rational, not a paſſionate—a mild and ſteady, not a wanton and rigorous government. We muſt lead and invite our children along in the path of duty by inſtruction, argument and example, not urge and drive them by force and terror. The former will animate, the latter will diſcourage them.

The Apoſtle has a particular regard to the *religious* education of children. This is the proper

import of the phraſe, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." By good inſtruction and example nouriſh them up in the doctrine of Chriſt. This is the principal thing: But in connexion with this, there muſt be alſo an attention to the nurture of their bodies, and their preparation for buſineſs and uſefulneſs in the world.

In all parts of the education, which we beſtow upon them, and the government which we exerciſe over them, we muſt attend to this caution, "not to provoke, but encourage them."

1. Parents are to *inſtruct* their children in the doctrines and duties of religion.

Children come into the world ignorant and uninformed. The principles and rudiments of religion muſt be gradually implanted in them, as they grow up to a capacity of receiving them. And to whom does it ſo naturally belong to implant theſe ſeeds, as to you, under whoſe care and authority God has placed them? You can beſt addreſs yourſelves to their capacities; you have the moſt frequent opportunities to converſe with them; and their affection for you and confidence in you will give your inſtructions a peculiar advantage.—Therefore God has given it in ſolemn charge, "that you diligently teach them his laws, and talk of them, when you ſit in your houſes, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you ariſe."

This work muſt be begun early, before their minds are warped by corrupt opinions, and hardened by vicious habits. "Whom ſhall you teach knowledge, and make to underſtand doctrine?—Them who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breaſt."

You muſt gently lead them along from the more plain and eaſy to the more difficult and ſublime truths of religion. "There muſt be here a little, and there a little." Plunge them not at once into

deep myſteries, nor lead them too faſt with a multitude of precepts, leſt they be diſcouraged. Our Savior ſpake the word to the people in parables, as they were able to hear it. He taught the truth to his diſciples gradually, as they could bear to receive it. He was careful not to put new wine into old bottles, leſt the bottles ſhould burſt, and the wine be loſt.

Think not that this attention is due to your children only in their firſt years; continue it as long as they are under your care. "Precept muſt be upon precept, and line upon line," that they may hear the word of the Lord.

2. Content not yourſelves with giving your children good inſtructions; but endeavor, by arguments, exhortations and reproofs, to form their lives according to your inſtructions.

Carefully watch their temper and manners. If you diſcover in them a vicious propenſity, check and reſtrain it, before it is grown into a habit.—Let not parental fondneſs make you blind to the faults which appear in them, or deaf to all complaints made againſt them. But to avoid this partiality, you muſt not run into extreme ſeverities, or unreaſonable jealouſies.

Ever carry a ſteady hand, and maintain a temperate diſcipline.

You may have occaſion to uſe your parental authority; but ſee that you uſe it with prudence, moderation and dignity. Give your children tokens of approbation or diſlike, as they do well, or ill. But take not ſevere notice of trivial miſtakes and accidental ſlips; this would diſcourage them. Neither connive at great and dangerous faults; this would tend to harden them.

Solomon ſays, "The rod and reproof give wiſdom." Haſty reproofs and paſſionate corrections ſhould be avoided. Theſe bring government into contempt. But then, to avoid rigor,

you muſt not wholly let go the reins of government: A child left to himſelf, brings himſelf to ruin and his parents to ſhame. "David diſpleaſed not his ſon Adonijah, at any time, ſaying, Why haſt thou done ſo?" But the good king had cauſe to repent of his indulgence, when he ſaw this ſon attempt to uſurp the kingdom. Small faults, indeed, had better be overlooked entirely, than reproved and puniſhed with ſharpneſs and ſeverity. But where a fault is great in itſelf, often repeated, or obſtinately perſiſted in, there lenity and connivance become criminal.

Eli, the prieſt and judge of Iſrael, uſed a very unbecoming moderation, when he thus rebuked the ſcandalous behavior of his ſons; "Why do ye ſuch things? I hear of your evil dealing by all the people; nay, my ſons, for it is no good report that I hear of you; you make the Lord's people to tranſgreſs." God therefore declares, "I will judge the houſe of Eli for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, becauſe his ſons made themſelves vile and he reſtrained them not."

Let your diſcipline be cool and diſpaſſionate, that it may appear to proceed from tender concern, not from wrath and revenge.

Frequent threatenings you muſt forbear. Theſe weaken authority far more than they deter from iniquity.

Chooſe the fitteſt ſeaſons of addreſſing your children. The Lord's day, an awakening providence, a family affliction and the deaths of young perſons, may be improved to give weight and energy to your counſels.

3. Regulate the diverſions of your children.

They are not to be excluded from all amuſements. Too ſevere reſtraints would diſcourage them. But then be careful, that their recreations are innocent in their nature; that they are well timed; and that they are uſed with moderation.

Thus they may contribute to health, cheerfulneſs, urbanity and benevolence. Diverſions of the oppoſite deſcription injure the body, corrupt the mind, and vitiate the manners.

Guard your children againſt the ſnares of evil company. Reſtrain them from all intimate ſociety with the profane, the lewd, the intemperate and the ſcoffers at religion. "He who walketh with wiſe men, will be wiſe; but a companion of fools will be deſtroyed."—"Bleſſed is he who walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful; but he delighteth in the law of the Lord, and therein doth meditate day and night."

4. Maintain the worſhip of God in your houſes. This is a mean of religion: And religion can never flouriſh, where the means of it are neglected.

The young members of your family will form their ſentiments in a great meaſure from your practice. If you neglect prayer to God, they will eaſily caſt off the fear of him. If they entertain an idea that you are indifferent to religion, your ſerious exhortations and reproofs will be unfelt and diſregarded. Abraham, who commanded his children after him, preſerved a ſacred intercourſe with God. Wherever he pitched his tent, there he erected an altar. It was the reſolution of Joſhua, that as for him and his houſe, they would ſerve the Lord. The Apoſtle exhorts Chriſtians to "pray always with all prayer." If there are any reaſons to worſhip God at all, there are reaſons for family worſhip. Whoever denies his obligation to this, will naturally diſcard all forms of devotion. God therefore ranks among the Heathens ſuch families, as call not on his name. Every Chriſtian family ſhould be a church, as the Apoſtle intimates, when he ſalutes maſters of families, and the churches in their reſpective houſes.

Let your domeſtic worſhip be maintained ſteadily, without unneceſſary omiſſions, and performed ſolemnly, without any appearance of levity. Let it not, however, be protracted to a tedious length, leſt it weary the attention and excite a diſguſt in tender minds; but let it be prudently adapted to the circumſtances of the ſeveral members of your houſehold, that it may tend to edification, not to diſcouragement.

5. Let your converſation be exemplary.

It was David's reſolution, "I will behave myſelf wiſely in a perfect way; I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart; I will ſet no wicked thing before mine eyes." Happy if you can appeal to your children in the language of the Apoſtle to the Theſſalonians, "Ye are witneſſes, how holily, juſtly and unblameably we have behaved ourſelves among you." And to the Philippians, "Thoſe things which ye have learned and received, and heard and *ſeen* in me, do, and the God of peace will be with you."

Without example, your inſtructions and reproofs will be languid and inefficacious. They will be heard with inattention, and treated with neglect.

6. Train up your children to diligence in ſome honeſt buſineſs.

This is not only neceſſary to their ſupport and uſefulneſs in life, but important in a religious view. Idleneſs is the bane and ruin of the young. It begets an indolence and deadneſs to every thing great, manly and virtuous, and invites every temptation and vice. "The *devil*, ſays one, "tempts the active and vigorous into his ſervice, knowing what proper inſtruments they are to do his drudgery; but the ſlothful and idle, no body having hired them and ſet them on work, lie in his way; he ſtumbles over them, as he goes about. They offer themſelves to his ſervice, and, having nothing

to do, they even tempt the devil to tempt *them*, and take them in his way."

Be not, however, rigorous in your exactions; bind not on them heavy burdens, leſt they be diſcouraged; but be reaſonable in your requirements, allow them proper relaxations, and give them time, and furniſh them with means, for the culture of their minds, and for their improvement in uſeful knowledge.

Finally: Commend your children to God, and to the word of his grace, who is able to bleſs them, and make them bleſſings in this world, and to prepare them for, and bring to an inheritance among them who are ſanctified.

Remember, that there is a ſpecial promiſe annexed to the command, which enjoins the reciprocal duties between children and their parents. If you bring them up in the ways of God, and they under your prudent care and influence walk therein, it will be well with them; and in their proſperity you will have a reward. The ſcripture contains many promiſes of divine concurrence with parental government, and of the divine bleſſing on filial obedience. If you wiſh to ſee your children proſperous in the world, reputable in ſociety and uſeful to mankind; if you wiſh to ſee them virtuous here, to experience their dutiful attention in your declining years, and to entertain the pleaſing hope of their eternal felicity in the future world, then bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Abraham commanded his children—God promiſed that they ſhould keep the way of the Lord, and that he would bring on him and them, the great and good things which he had ſpoken. Be perſuaded then by the commands and promiſes of God—by your love to your children—by your concern for their earthly comfort and heavenly happineſs—by your regard to your own peace, hope and joy—by your obligations to

ſociety—by your benevolence to mankind, and particularly to the riſing race—by the duty which you owe to God and men—to the preſent and ſucceeding generations, that you preſent your children to God, train them up in his ſervice, and teach them to keep his ways.



SERMON XLVI.

EPHESIANS vi. 5——9.

Servants, be obedient to them which are your maſters, according to the fleſh, with fear and trembling, in ſingleneſs of your heart as unto Chriſt; not with eye ſervice, as men pleaſers, but as the ſervants of Chriſt, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing ſervice, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatſoever good thing any man doth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

And, ye maſters, do the ſame things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your maſter alſo is in heaven, neither is there any reſpect of perſons with him.

IN the preceding verſes the Apoſtle explains the reciprocal duties of huſbands and wives, and of parents and children. In the words now read, he ſtates the mutual obligations of maſters and ſervants. Theſe three ſets of duties comprehend all thoſe which reſult from domeſtic relations.

Under the name of *ſervants* he doubtleſs means to include all thoſe ſubordinate members of a family, who are not children, whether they be ſlaves, properly ſo called, or ſervants for a term of years.

His enjoining on ſervants obedience to their maſters, implies a conceſſion, that there might be, and was then ſuch a relation as maſter and ſervant, in Chriſtian, as well as in Heathen and Jewiſh families.

The law of Moſes provided, that a Jew might be ſold for the payment of a debt, or for the compenſation of an injury done to a neighbor, particularly by theft; and that in caſe of extreme poverty, one might ſell his own children. But, in theſe caſes, the ſale was to be made to one of his own nation, not to a ſtranger; and the ſervitude was to be only for a limited time, not for life. It was to expire in the next Jubilee; ſo that it could not continue longer than ſix years. And the perſon ſold was to be treated with humanity, and kindneſs; not as a ſlave, but as a hired ſervant.

Of the neighboring nations the Jews might purchaſe ſlaves. Theſe they might retain in bondage through life, and uſe as their property, by ſelling or exchanging them, or by diſpoſing of them to their children.

The Supreme Lord of the Univerſe, for holy and wiſe reaſons, was pleaſed to give the Jews a permiſſion to extirpate the nations of Canaan; at leaſt ſuch of them as would not accept conditions of peace, and ſubmit to become tributaries. And as it was a common uſage among thoſe nations to make ſlaves of captives taken in war, God allowed the Jews to purchaſe ſlaves of them. But the particular permiſſion given to the Jews, is not a general warrant for us to do the ſame; any more than the leave granted them to diſpoſſeſs the Canaanites, is a warrant for us to diſpoſſeſs all Heathens, Infidels and Heretics, who are inferior to us in power. Men have their natural rights, independently of their religious character; and we may no more invade the rights of Heathens, than they may invade

ours. Religion makes no alteration in mens' civil or natural relations and obligations.

There are, however, certain caſes, in which men may rightfully be deprived of their natural liberty for a time, or for life. The Apoſtle ſays, "Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called.

Art thou called, being a ſervant, care not for it; but if thou mayeſt be made free, uſe it rather." He concedes, that liberty is deſirable, and what every man ought to chooſe. But if he cannot innocently obtain it, he muſt patiently endure the want of it. When he gives inſtructions to maſters how to treat their ſervants, he ſuppoſes, that it may, in ſome caſes, be right for Chriſtians to have ſervants, otherwiſe he would have ordered thoſe who had ſervants immediately to diſmiſs them. When he explains the duties of ſervants, he ſignifies, that ſuch as could not innocently obtain their freedom, ſhould contentedly remain in ſervitude. When Oneſimus deſerted his maſter, and in his abſence became a Chriſtian, Paul, far from juſtifying his deſertion, ſent him back to his maſter.

There is a natural ſubjection, which children owe to their parents, and though neither reaſon nor ſcripture fixes any certain period, when this ſubjection ſhould terminate; yet, in general, it is plain, that the ſubjection ought to continue to that time of life, when children are uſually capable of ſupporting and governing themſelves. And becauſe they are not competent judges for themſelves in this matter, the civil authority, in moſt ſocieties, fixes the age, at which they ſhall be at their own diſpoſal.

As parents are to provide for their children, ſo they are to judge, by what ways and means they beſt can do it. And whenever they think proper, they have an undoubted right to put their children

under the care of others. This is only to transfer their own authority for their childrens' benefit.

Excepting the caſe of parental authority, or guardianſhip which comes in its place, I do not conceive that any can rightfully be made ſervants, but either with their own conſent, or for ſome criminal action by which they forfeited their liberty.

A man may, no doubt, alienate to another his natural liberty by contract for a limited time, when he apprehends this will be for his own benefit and advantage. And ſuch a contract he is bound to fulfil, as much as any other.

Societies have a right to make laws for the common ſafety; and to annex ſuch ſanctions, as are neceſſary to give efficacy to their laws. If certain crimes may be puniſhed with death, as ſeems generally to be ſuppoſed; others may clearly be puniſhed with the deprivation of liberty for a time, or for life. And if a man, by any crime, incurs the loſs of liberty, he may rightfully be held in ſervitude. But to take away one's natural liberty by force, without a forfeiture on his part, is as unjuſtifiable, as to take away his property, or his life. By the divine law, the ſtealing of a man to ſell him for a ſlave, was to be puniſhed with death.

It being admitted, that there may be in families ſuch a relation as maſter and ſervant, let us attend to the duties which belong to it.

We will, firſt, conſider the duties of ſervants, with the encouragement ſubjoined.

1. They are "to be *obedient* to their maſters—to *obey* them in all things."

This muſt be underſtood with the ſame limitation, as all other commands enjoining relative duties. We are to "obey God rather than men." Our firſt obligations are to *him*; and only in thoſe things which he allows can we owe ſubjection to them. No human authority can bind us in oppo-

ſition to the laws of virtue and righteouſneſs. Servants muſt "be obedient to their maſters, as to Chriſt, doing the will of God from the heart." They no farther obey their maſters, according to the will of God, than they make his will the rule and meaſure of their obedience to their maſters. They have no right to withhold obedience, on pretence that the matter enjoined may not be for their maſter's intereſt. But they are bound to withhold it, when they know the thing required is contrary to God's command.

2. Servants owe their maſters *reverence*, as well as obedience.

The Apoſtle ſays to them, "Obey your maſters with *fear* and *trembling*." Entertain a reſpect for the ſuperiority of their ſtation—a concern, leſt you prejudice their intereſt—a fear leſt you incur their diſpleaſure. Do nothing unneceſſarily to provoke them—adjuſt your manners to their inclination; and, as far as innocence will allow, pleaſe them well in all things. The Apoſtle Peter gives ſimilar advice, "Be ſubject to your maſters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but to the froward." If they are men of haſty and difficult tempers, then conduct toward them with the greater caution and prudence. Never diſturb them needleſsly, nor irritate them wantonly; but by your eaſy, accommodating and diſcreet carriage, ſoften the harſhneſs, and ſmoothe the ruggedneſs of their ſpirits.

3. From ſervants there is an *honor*, as well as fear, due to their maſters.

"Let as many ſervants as are under the yoke, count their own maſters worthy of *all honor*, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blaſphemed;" or that the goſpel be not reproached among infidels, as if it encouraged the inſolence of ſervants. "And they who have *believing* maſters, let them not deſpiſe them," or treat them as if they



were but equals, "becauſe they are brethren" in the Chriſtian relation; for this diſſolves not mens' natural and civil relations; "but rather let them do ſervice" to ſuch maſters the more cheerfully, "becauſe they are faithful and beloved."

Servants muſt not only treat their maſters reſpectfully in their preſence, but be tender of their honor and reputation at all times—not ſpeaking evil of them—not reporting every inſtance of miſconduct which they obſerve in the family—not complaining of the government which they are under, unleſs the occaſion be urgent; and then, only to thoſe from whom they are to expect redreſs.

4. *Cheerfulneſs* in their obedience is recommended by the Apoſtle. "With *good will* do ſervice." "Be obedient to your maſters—pleaſe them well in all things, not anſwering again," not murmuring, objecting and cavilling; but acting with a ready mind.

5. *Diligence* or faithfulneſs is another duty which they owe to their maſter.

They ſhould conſider his buſineſs as their own; and act in it with the ſame attention and care, as if they were immediately intereſted. They ſhould ſerve him "with ſingleneſs of heart, not with eye ſervice"—and "with all good fidelity," "not purloining" his property, neglecting his buſineſs, or doing his work deceitfully.

6. They are to be *patient* and *ſubmiſſive*, though they meet with uſage more ſevere than they think reaſonable; not breaking their own obligations, or deſerting their maſter's ſervice for trivial cauſes, but bearing his ſmaller indiſcretions, without complaint; and, in caſes of real injury, ſeeking relief in a prudent manner, and by lawful means. "Be ſubject to the froward," ſays the Apoſtle, "as well as to the good and gentle."—"Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is call-

ed. Art thou called being a ſervant, care not for it; but if thou mayeſt be made free, uſe it rather."

Finally: In all their ſervice, they ſhould act with an aim to pleaſe God, and to obtain his approbation. "Be obedient to your maſters as to Chriſt—with good will do ſervice, as to the Lord, and not to men."

A regard to God is to be the governing principle in all the duties of the ſocial life, as well as in thoſe of piety. Even the ſervant is, on this principle, to obey his maſter. When this governs us, then our ſecular, domeſtic and civil duties, become a part of pure and undefiled religion.

By way of encouragement to ſervants, the Apoſtle ſays, "With good will do ſervice as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatſoever good thing any man doth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." In Chriſt Jeſus there is no diſtinction of bond or free, rich or poor: They are all one in him.

Mankind are called to ſerve God in various ſtations and capacities. Some act in a larger, and ſome in a narrower ſphere. Some are appointed to higher, and ſome to humbler ſervices. But all are the ſervants of God; all are accountable to him; all ſhould walk, not as pleaſing men, but God who ſearcheth the heart. We eſteem and regard our fellow men very much, according to external diſtinctions of rank and fortune. God looks on their hearts—he approves or condemns them according to the difference of real characters. The ſervant, who from the heart does God's will, and acts with fidelity and diligence in his humble ſtation, aiming in all things to pleaſe the Supreme Lord, and in obedience to him, ſerving his earthly maſter, and hoping for acceptance through the atonement of the great Redeemer, this man is as highly approved, and will be as ſurely rewarded in heaven, as if he had acted on the moſt conſpicu-

ous theatre, or moved in the largeſt circle. Our future happineſs depends not on external circumſtances, but on the holy diſpoſitions and tempers of the hidden man of the heart. While the unbelieving maſter, or the impious monarch, is rejected of God; the believing ſervant, who acts in ſingleneſs of heart to the Lord; the humble and contented beggar, rich in faith, ſhall receive of the Lord an inheritance in the kingdom prepared for them who love him.

Secondly. We paſs now to conſider the duty of maſters to their ſervants. The Apoſtle ſays, "Ye maſters, do the ſame things to them."—Shew to them the ſame benevolence and faithfulneſs in your place, as they, in theirs, are required to ſhew to you. "Forbear threatening." Let your government be mild and prudent; not paſſionate and ſevere. "And know, that your maſter alſo is in heaven;" and to him you muſt give an account of your conduct toward ſervants, as well as they of their conduct toward you: "And there is no reſpect of perſons with him."

In the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, this precept is thus expreſſed: "Maſters give unto your ſervants that which is juſt and equal, knowing that ye alſo have a maſter in heaven."

The terms, *juſtice* and *equity*, are often uſed in the ſame ſenſe; but ſometimes they expreſs different ideas. To give a ſervant that which is *juſt*, is to deal with him according to contract or agreement. To give him that which is *equal*, is to treat him fairly, honeſtly, kindly, according to reaſon and conſcience; whether we are bound by an explicit bargain or not. And as there are different ſorts of ſervants, ſo theſe two terms are choſen to expreſs all that variety of obligations, which we may be under to them, according to their various conditions.

With reſpect to *apprentices*, the contract binds the maſter not only to give them a comfortable ſupport, or ſuch part of it as the contract ſpecifies, but alſo to inſtruct them in his buſineſs and profeſſion. They give their time and labor for his art and ſkill. If he withholds from them that ſkill for which they agree to ſerve him; or conceals from them any part of it through negligence or deſign; or employs them in other buſineſs ſo far, that they have not opportunity to acquire the neceſſary knowledge of his art, he is guilty of injuſtice and fraud. He violates the engagement which he made either expreſsly, or according to the natural underſtanding of the parties.

With reſpect to *laborers*, who in ſcripture are called hired ſervants, juſtice obliges us to give them the ſtipulated wages, when they have faithfully performed the promiſed ſervice. Thus it is enjoined in the law of Moſes, "Thou ſhalt not oppreſs the hired ſervant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of the ſtrangers that are within thy gates; at his day ſhalt thou give him his hire, (for he is poor, and ſetteth his heart upon it) leſt he cry againſt thee to the Lord, and it be ſin unto thee."

And with reſpect to all ſervants of every denomination, *equity* requires, that we treat them with humanity and kindneſs—that we endeavor to make their ſervice eaſy, and their condition comfortable, that we forbear raſh and paſſionate language—that we overlook accidental errors, and remit trivial faults—that we impoſe only ſuch labor as is reaſonable in itſelf, and ſuitable to their capacity—that our reproofs be calm, and our counſels well timed—that the reſtraints we lay upon them be prudent and ſalutary—that we allow them reaſonable time for reſt and refreſhment, for the culture of their minds, and for attendance on the worſhip of God—that we ſet before them a virtuous example, inſtil

into them uſeful principles, warn them againſt wickedneſs of every kind, eſpecially againſt the ſin which moſt eaſily beſets them—that we afford them opportunity for reading and private devotion, and furniſh them with the neceſſary means of learning the way of ſalvation—that we attend to the preſervation of their health, and have compaſſion on them in ſickneſs; and, in a word, that we contribute all proper aſſiſtance to render them uſeful, virtuous and happy.

Theſe are the principal duties compriſed in the Apoſtle's direction, "Ye maſters, do the ſame things—and give to your ſervants that which is juſt and equal."

To engage the maſter in the performance of theſe duties, let him conſider, that whatever worldly diſtinction there may be between him and thoſe who ſerve him, they are men as well as he; they are partakers of the ſame rational nature, and of the ſame fleſh and blood; they are creatures of the ſame God, and under the care of the ſame providence. Job felt the force of this argument. "If I deſpiſed the cauſe of my manſervant, or of my maidſervant, when they contended with me, what ſhall I do when God riſeth up? And when he viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer him? Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? And did not one faſhion us both?

Let the maſter alſo conſider, that he himſelf has a maſter in heaven, with whom there is no reſpect of perſons; to whom bond and free are both alike; to whom the ſervant is as dear as the maſter; by whom all will be judged with the ſame impartiality; and from whom each will receive according to his works.

Let him remember, that this heavenly maſter, when he was on earth, took on him the form of a ſervant, and was among his own diſciples as one who ſerved; that he honored the loweſt conditions in life by appearing in them, and recommended

humility; meekneſs and condeſcenſion by his own example; that nothing can raiſe men to his favor, but pure and undiſſembled religion; that with this the loweſt of the human race are truly honorable—without it the higheſt are vile and contemptible.

Let us learn then to diſregard worldly diſtinctions, and be ſolicitous to poſſeſs the temper of Chriſt's divine religion. This teaches us how to behave in every condition—this affords ſupport in every trouble—this will give patience and fortitude in every trial—this will enable us to cloſe life with hope and joy.



SERMON XLVII.

EPHESIANS vi. 10——17.

Finally, my brethren, be ſtrong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil. For we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood; but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withſtand in the evil day, and having done all to ſtand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breaſtplate of righteouſneſs, and your feet ſhod with the preparation of the goſpel of peace, and above all taking the ſhield of faith wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of ſalvation, and the ſword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

THE Apoſtle, having ſtated the doctrines and duties of the Chriſtian religion and proved its truth and importance, ſubjoins this animated exhortation to conſtancy and perſeverance in it, whatever oppoſition might ariſe either from fleſh and blood, or from the powers of the kingdom of darkneſs.

The words now read contain,

An exhortation to *fortitude*—a warning of the *enemies* to be oppoſed—and a deſcription of the *armor* to be uſed.

I. Here is an exhortation to *Chriſtian Fortitude*. "Be ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

It is not bodily, but *mental* ſtrength, which is here intended; for this only can be employed in a warfare with ſpiritual enemies. We are to be ſtrong *in the Lord*, or in the belief, profeſſion and practice of his religion—and in the power of *his might*, or in the grace which is derived from him. We are to "ſtand faſt in the faith, quit ourſelves like men and be ſtrong."

True fortitude or courage is a temper or habit of mind, by which we ſteadily follow the calls of duty, without being deterred by danger, or diverted by difficulty.

It ſuppoſes ſome *oppoſition* to contend with. In eaſy duties we may be obedient; but we diſcover greatneſs of mind and ſtrength of virtue only in caſes which require ſelfdenial.

This alſo ſuppoſes an *apprehenſion* of difficulty. Thus it is diſtinguiſhed from ſtupidity, which ruſhes into danger only becauſe it is blind and thoughtleſs.

Chriſtian courage is employed in things *virtuous* and *commendable*. In this reſpect it differs from *fool hardineſs*, which is guided by no principle, but runs into danger through vanity and oſtentation.

Real fortitude is a *ſettled* and *habitual temper*, in diſtinction from thoſe ſtarts of reſolution, and flights of zeal, which depend on paſſion, accident, or ſome mechanical cauſe.

It is a virtue founded in a *regard* to *God*, and ſupported by *faith* in *him*. Thus it is diſtinguiſhed from that madneſs of courage, which is excited by reſentment, ambition, avarice and luſt; and from

that daring contempt and defiance of danger or death, which ſometimes attend atheiſm and infidelity.

It is always to be under the direction of that *prudence*, which ſhuns danger when it may, and meets evil only in the path where duty calls.

That our courage may be a virtue, it muſt have a *worthy object*. "It is good to be zealouſly affected in a good thing." And "no man is crowned, except he ſtrive lawfully."

Our engagedneſs ſhould be proportioned to the *importance* of the object.

For the faith delivered to the ſaints we muſt contend earneſtly. In matters of indifference or mere expedience, we muſt be gentle and eaſy to be entreated.

Courage muſt purſue its end only by *lawful means*. Peter was bold to draw his ſword in his maſter's defence; but his boldneſs was rebuked, becauſe it ſeized an inſtrument never to be uſed in Chriſt's kingdom.

Chriſtian fortitude is cool and deliberate, not raſh and impetuous: It is kind and compaſſionate, not cruel and revengeful: It is ſteady and patient, not fickle and inconſtant: It continues in well doing, perſuaded that its labor is not in vain.

II. The Apoſtle warns the Epheſians of the *enemies* with whom they might expect to contend.—"Be ſtrong—that ye may ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil; for we wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkneſs of this world and ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places."

It is common in ſcripture to expreſs a diſparity between two objects by a rejection of the leſs. The prophet ſays, "God will have mercy, and not ſacrifice;" or rather than ſacrifice. Our Savior ſays, "Labor not for the meat which periſheth, but for that which endureth to everlaſting life." Labor

for the latter principally. Paul ſays, "Chriſt ſent me not to baptize, but to preach the goſpel; to do the latter rather than the former. Thus we are to underſtand the expreſſion in the text, "We wreſtle not," merely "againſt fleſh and blood, but" alſo "againſt principalities and powers."

Fleſh is often uſed figuratively for that which is *weak*. The prophet ſays, "Curſed be the man who maketh *fleſh* his arm;" or truſts in an *impotent* creature, "and departeth from the Lord." The Apoſtle ſays, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," not *weak*, "but mighty through God."—And this ſeems to be the ſenſe of the word here.—We wreſtle not merely againſt feeble enemies, but againſt ſuch as are ſtrong and formidable.

The Apoſtle mentions two ſorts of enemies.

1. The firſt he calls *fleſh* and *blood*.

Under this denomination ſeveral things are comprehended.

It may intend the motions of our *animal* nature.—Thus the phraſe is uſed, when it is ſaid, "Fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

Human nature conſiſts of fleſh and ſpirit. From their union ariſe many appetites and inclinations, for which in unbodied ſpirits there will be no room. By the apoſtacy the fleſh has gained a dominion over the ſpirit. Hence wicked men are deſcribed as being in, and walking after the *fleſh*; and true Chriſtians as being in, and walking after the *ſpirit*. The renewed Chriſtian, though he is recovered from the dominion, is not entirely freed from the influence of the fleſh. "He delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man; but ſtill he finds in his members a law which wars againſt the law of his mind." He has need therefore to reſtrain inordinate affection and to keep under his body.

The phraſe may farther intend thoſe *ſenſible objects*, which are ſuited to gratify fleſhly deſires.——

"They who are in the fleſh, mind the things of the fleſh;" worldly objects, riches, honors and pleaſures. The Chriſtian muſt not only ſubdue his fleſhly luſts, but guard againſt the inſnaring influence of earthly things, and keep himſelf unſpotted from the pollutions, and diſentangled from the diſtractions of the world. There is a regard which he owes to the intereſts of the preſent life; but he muſt not regard them beyond their importance.—He is to be diligent in his worldly calling, but not overcharged with worldly cares.

The phraſe may intend *mankind* who are partakers of *fleſh and blood*. In this ſenſe it is often uſed. When Peter profeſſed his faith in Chriſt, his Lord replied, "Fleſh and blood," or man, "hath not revealed this unto thee; but my Father who is in heaven." Paul ſays, "When God revealed his Son in me, immediately I conferred not with fleſh and blood, nor went I up to them, who were Apoſtle's before me." If we ſo underſtand the phraſe here, the meaning will be, that we muſt not conform to the evil cuſtoms and manners of the men of the world, but prove what is acceptable to God—that we muſt walk, not as pleaſing men, but God who ſearcheth the heart—that we muſt maintain our faith and integrity, whatever reproaches or perſecutions we may ſuffer, eſteeming it a ſmall thing to be judged of man's judgment, ſince he who will finally judge us is the Lord.

2. The other kind of enemies with whom we are to contend are *evil ſpirits*.

Theſe the Apoſtle calls "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkneſs of this world," or of this age of ſuperſtition and ignorance, "and ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places," or in heavenly places, thoſe aerial regions, which evil ſpirits inhabit. Hence the devil is called "the prince of the power of the air." By the names here uſed the fallen angels are in ſcripture often called.

Theſe ſpirits are enemies to mankind. "They go about ſeeking whom they may deſtroy." They work moſt powerfully in the children of diſobedience; but even good men are not ſecure from their machinations. Chriſt warns his diſciples, that "Satan had deſired to have them, that he might ſift them as wheat.

The various denominations here beſtowed on them, import that their number is great; and the terms uſed denote a ſubordination among them.—They are not divided againſt themſelves, but act in concert under the direction of one leading Spirit, who is called the Devil and Satan, the god of this world and the prince of darkneſs. Hence we read of the devil and his angels, and the prince of the power of the air.

The names applied to them ſignify, that they have great power over ſuch as ſubmit to their dominion. "They work in the children of diſobedience, and lead them captive at their will."

The Apoſtle ſpeaks of "the *wiles* of the devil." Theſe wicked ſpirits uſe much art and cunning to decoy men into error and vice. We need to be appriſed of their devices, leſt they ſhould get an advantage againſt us.

They carry on their machinations *ſecretly*.—Hence they are called "powers of darkneſs. Their chief influence is over the ignorant and ſuperſtitious, over people of little knowledge, weak underſtanding and ſtrong imagination. They moſt ſucceſsfully carry on their deſigns in the dark: They cannot bear the ſtrong beams of light: When the goſpel began to ſhine, Satan began to fall. Among thoſe who reject the goſpel, he recovers his full dominion.

Since ſuch enemies are watching for our deſtruction—enemies numerous, powerful, crafty, inviſible and malignant, let us be ſober and vigilant, cautious and circumſpect, and let us aſſume immediately, and wear continually the whole armor of

God, that we may ſtand in the evil day. We proceed,

III. To illuſtrate the deſcription, which the Apoſtle gives of this divine armor.

The ſeveral parts of it mentioned in our text, are truth, righteouſneſs, peace, faith, hope and knowledge.

We are to *take to us* this armor. The armor is God's; but we muſt *take* and *uſe* it. Our ſecurity againſt temptations depends on the grace of God:—Our enjoyment of this grace depends on our application of the means afforded us.

We muſt take, not this or that piece, but the *whole* armor—not content ourſelves with the obſervance of particular duties, or with the partial practice of religion; but poſſeſs the *whole* chriſtian temper and abound in *every* good work.

We muſt ſtand in the *evil day*—in the times which are moſt perilous and trying—in the times when the rulers of darkneſs muſter their armies againſt the friends of truth. Such was the day when Paul wrote this epiſtle. It was a day of perſecution—he himſelf was then in bonds. Godly ſincerity is beſt proved by a ſteady adherence to the cauſe of Chriſt in times when it is attended with peculiar dangers.

"Having done all," or overcome all, ſtill "we muſt ſtand." When we have prevailed in one conflict, we muſt not put off the harneſs, as if our warfare were accompliſhed; but ſtill wear our armor and ſtand prepared for another aſſault.—— "When the devil has ended his temptation, he departs," but it is only "for a ſeaſon."

The armor is before us, let us take and uſe it.

1. The Apoſtle ſays, "Stand, having your loins girt about with *truth*." He alludes to the cuſtom of the eaſtern nations, who, wearing looſe and flowing robes, girded them about their loins, that they might not be entangled with them. This was in

ſoldiers a neceſſary preparation for action. To this cuſtom David alludes; "Thou haſt girded me with ſtrength to the battle." Paul borrows the metaphor from Iſaiah, who, ſpeaking of the Meſſiah, ſays, "Righteouſneſs ſhall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulneſs the girdle of his reins." Peter uſes the ſame figure; "Gird up the loins of your mind."

Truth is the girdle with which our loins muſt be braced. By *truth* is intended *ſincerity* in our Chriſtian profeſſion, or a firm belief of, and full conſent to the goſpel of Chriſt. If we receive the goſpel on the authority of man, without a perſuaſion in our own minds; or if we profeſs it for worldly ends, without a love of its doctrines and precepts, we ſhall eaſily be drawn away from it by the temptations of the world and the artifice of deſigning men. A rational conviction of its *truth*, joined with a deep ſenſe of its importanoe is our beſt ſecurity againſt apoſtacy in the evil day.

2. "Have on the breaſtplate of *righteouſneſs*."—This expreſſion is alſo taken from Iſaiah, who, ſpeaking of God's judgment on the enemies of the church, ſays, "He put on righteouſneſs as a breaſtplate."

Here is an alluſion to the ancient cuſtom of ſoldiers, who, when they were going to battle, guarded the vital part with a plate of iron or braſs, or ſome other impenetrable ſubſtance.

The breaſtplate of the Chriſtian warrior muſt be *righteouſneſs*. This is St. Peters advice; "Let them who ſuffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in *well doing*, as to a faithful Creator."—"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; and his ears are open to their prayers—and who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But if ye ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake, happy are you.—It is better to ſuffer for well doing, than for evil doing." A

holy and inoffenſive life will prevent many injuries. It will command the reverence of bad, and the compaſſion of good men. It will obtain the protection of God's providence and the ſupports of his grace. It will preſerve peace and ſerenity of conſcience under the reproaches of a malignant world.

3. "Let your *feet* be *ſhod* with the preparation of the goſpel of *peace*."

Shoes were anciently a part of military armor. The giant of Gath "had greaves of braſs upon his legs."—"To be ſhod," is to be in readineſs for action. The Iſraelites in Egypt were to eat the paſſover, "with their ſhoes on their feet," prepared to march at the firſt notice. The Apoſtles were to be "ſhod with ſandals," ready to go whither their maſter ſhould ſend them. The goſpel is called, "the goſpel of peace," becauſe it expreſsly requires, and ſtrongly recommends a peaceable, meek, forgiving temper. "If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." This peaceable diſpoſition is a happy "preparation" for the trials of an evil day, and an excellent defence againſt the aſperities of our Chriſtian path. This will go on before us to ſmooth the rough paſſages of life, or attend us to guard our feet againſt the ſticks and traps which our enemies caſt in our way. Poſſeſſed of this diſpoſition, we ſhall give no offence and provoke no injuries by an inſolent, overbearing behavior; the injuries, which we receive, we ſhall bear with calmneſs; we ſhall neither aggravate the pain of them by undue reſentment, nor cauſe the repetition of them by haſty revenge; we ſhall not be overcome of evil, but ſhall overcome evil with good. This temper is our beſt ſecurity againſt the temptations of evil ſpirits; for it is by means of our turbulent and unruly paſſions, that they gain acceſs to our minds—it is by the indulgence of pride, wrath, malice and revenge, that we

give place to them. By the wiſdom, which is pure, gentle and peaceable, we reſiſt the devil and expel him from us. The peace of God ruling within us, will keep our hearts and minds through Jeſus Chriſt. Thus ſecured the wicked one will not touch us. "Be wiſe to that which is good, and ſimple concerning evil, and the God of peace will tread Satan under your feet."

4. "Above all things take the *ſhield of faith*, whereby ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

A ſhield is a piece of light armor, made of firm wood or hard ſkin, and ſometimes of metal, which ſoldiers anciently uſed in battle to defend themſelves againſt the ſpears and darts of their enemies. In handling it they were ſo expert, that they could uſually guard any part of the body, at which a paſs was made. In alluſion to this, the Apoſtle directs Chriſtians, not only to gird the loins with truth, defend the breaſt with righteouſneſs, and ſecure the feet with the ſandals of peace; but to aſſume the *ſhield of faith*, an inſtrument of more general defence, by which they will repel *all* the fiery darts of the wicked one. This we are to take *above all things*. Faith is a grace of univerſal influence. It is the baſis of all Chriſtian graces. It is the ground work of religion in the heart. On this we muſt build ourſelves up, adding to it all other virtues. This is the ſubſtance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not ſeen. This purifies the heart and quickens to obedience. This unites the ſoul to Chriſt, and embraces the promiſes of God in him. This looks to God as a preſent help in trouble, and relies on the holy Spirit for ſupport in the time of need. It contemplates with joy the captain of ſalvation, who has overcome the world, and triumphed over principalities and powers.—It conſiders him, who for the joy ſet before him endured the croſs, and is now ſet down on the right

hand of God, and who has graciouſly promiſed, that they who overcome ſhall ſit with him on his throne.

Faith thus operating is a more effectual defence againſt the temptations of Satan and the world, than the ſhields of the mighty againſt the darts and ſpears of their enemies.

5. "Take the *helmet of ſalvation.*"

Or, as it is expreſſed elſewhere, "put on for an helmet the *hope* of ſalvation." The expreſſion is taken from Iſaiah, who, ſpeaking of the Almighty dreſſed in arms to ſubdue his enemies, ſays, "He put on righteouſneſs as a breaſtplate, and a helmet of ſalvation was on his head. God brings ſalvation. We appropriate it by hope. This is our helmet.

The uſe of the helmet is to ſecure the head in the day of battle. It was of ſpecial utility in former times, when armies met and diſputed the ground ſword in hand. In the Chriſtian warfare, not a helmet of braſs, but the hope of ſalvation, muſt be the defence. We muſt fight the good fight of faith in hope that the captain of ſalvation will ſupport us in the conflict and lead us to victory. We muſt endure temptations in hope of a crown of glory—continue in well doing in hope of eternal life—abound in the work of the Lord in hope that our labor is not in vain. In the clear view of a future world, and in the full expectation of a bleſſed immortality, what difficulty can diſcourage us—what temptation can divert us—what danger can deter us from the religious life? "Our preſent light affliction, which is but for a moment, will work for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."

6. "Take the *Sword of the Spirit* which is the word of God."

The former pieces of armor were for defence:—This is for annoyance, as well as defence. The

divine word is called "the ſword of the Spirit," either becauſe it is a ſpiritual weapon adapted to the religious warfare, in diſtinction from the carnal weapons uſed in the literal warfare; or becauſe it is an inſtrument rendered effectual by the Spirit to ſlay the fleſhly luſts and repel the outward temptations which war againſt the ſoul. "The word of God is quick and powerful, ſharper than any two edged ſword, piercing even to the dividing aſſunder of the ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart." This was the weapon which our Lord uſed in his conflict with Satan. In his hands it was effectual: By his aid it will be effectual in ours.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We ſee of what importance it is that we have the power of religion in our hearts. It is only by this, that we become ſtrong in the Lord. The whole armor of God conſiſts in truth, righteouſneſs, peace, faith, hope and the word of God dwelling in us. Real religion is the principle of true courage. Let us have root in ourſelves, and be grounded and eſtabliſhed in the faith. We may without ſincerity aſſume the form of religion; but without ſincerity we ſhall eaſily drop the form which we have aſſumed. The hypocrite will be put out of countenance by thoſe ſcoffs and reproaches, which only warm the zeal, and ſtrengthen the reſolution of the real Chriſtian.

2. It concerns us to live much in the exerciſe of faith. This is the great principle of Chriſtian fortitude. "Add to your faith virtue." It is a main implement in the ſpiritual armor. "Above all things take the ſhield of faith." He that is ſtrong in faith, will be ſtedfaſt in religion. When Paul ſuffered in the cauſe of Chriſt, he profeſſed, that

he was not aſhamed, becauſe he knew whom he had believed.

3. Let us exerciſe our courage according to the various exigences of the Chriſtian life.

It requires much reſolution to ſubdue our corrupt inclinations, reſtrain our irregular paſſions and follow the dictates of religion, when intereſt, cuſtom and reputation ſeem to preſcribe a different line of conduct.

There is need of fortitude that we may openly profeſs and ſteadily practice religion, when it is treated with ridicule and contempt by thoſe with whom we are connected.

The young convert has occaſion for courage, that he may break off his intimacy with ungodly aſſociates, and ſay to them, "Depart from me, for I will keep the commandments of God."

The young houſeholder, dwelling in an irreligious neighborhood, and among thoſe who make a mock of family devotion, needs reſolution, that he may ſay with Joſhua, "If it ſeem evil to you to ſerve the Lord, chooſe ye, this day, whom ye will ſerve: But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord."

It is a work of courage to begin and carry on a reformation in families and neighborhoods, to oppoſe error and vice, and patronize truth and virtue, when the general voice is againſt us.

It requires reſolution to vindicate an injured character, and plead in defence of oppreſſed innocence, when it is become an object of common ſlander and obloquy.

There is need of fortitude to perſevere in well doing againſt all the oppoſitions and diſcouragements, which may meet us in our way.

So many and various are the calls for Chriſtian fortitude, that every one who enters on the religious life, ſhould ſet out with it, and in his progreſs often

contemplate thoſe truths which may increaſe and ſtrengthen it.

To conclude: As we have engaged in the ſervice of Chriſt, let us be faithful to the death. Enemies we have to conflict with; but let us not fear: Greater is he who is with us, than they who are in the world. Let us put on his armor, go forth in his name, obey his orders, ſtrive lawfully, be ſober and vigilant, endure hardneſs as good ſoldiers, rely for ſupport on him who has called us, quit ourſelves like men and be ſtrong: Thus we ſhall overcome, and inherit all things.





SERMON XLVIII.

EPHESIANS vi. 18, 19, 20.

Praying always with all prayer and ſupplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perſeverance, and ſupplication for all ſaints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the myſtery of the goſpel, for which I am an ambaſſador in bonds, that therein I may ſpeak boldly as I ought to ſpeak.

OUR vigor and activity in the uſe of the divine armor, deſcribed in the preceding verſes, depend on the conſtant energy and ſupport of God's grace. Therefore with the uſe of this armor the Apoſtle exhorts us to join vigilant, ſincere and perſevering prayer. His inſtructions on this ſubject are contained in the words now read, which I ſhall open to you in ſeveral obſervations.

1. The Apoſtle here ſuppoſes our *obligation to prayer* to be ſo plain, that every rational mind will ſee it, and ſo important, that every pious heart will feel it. Therefore, inſtead of adducing arguments to prove the duty, he rather points out the manner in which it ſhould be performed.

Our obligation to prayer naturally reſults from our weakneſs and dependence, and God's allſufficiency and goodneſs. We feel our wants and our

inability to ſupply them; and we ſee the impotence of the creatures around us. If then we believe there is an inviſible Being, infinite in power, wiſdom and goodneſs, always preſent with us and exerciſing a continual providence over us, it is obviouſly reaſonable to direct our deſires to him. And deſires directed to him are prayer.

To clothe our deſires in language is not eſſential to prayer. God hears the *deſire* of the humble.—But as we are accuſtomed to the uſe of language in communicating our thoughts to one another, we naturally fall into the uſe of it, in directing our deſires to God. In *ſocial* prayer this is neceſſary, that we may with one mind glorify the Father. And in our *ſecret* devotions a kind of ſilent language uſually accompanies the ſentiments of our hearts. This aſſiſts us to fix our attention, arrange our thoughts and enliven our affections.—Creatures organized as we are, and accuſtomed to the uſe of words in their intercourſe with one another, cannot eaſily frame a mental prayer without ſomething like verbal expreſſions.

"But if God is powerful, wiſe and good, what need of any prayer? Will he not do for us what is beſt without our ſolicitation?"

As well may you aſk, "What need is there of diligence in our calling? Cannot God by his own omnipotence ſupply our wants without our help?" He has given us powers, and he requires us to uſe them. And there is the ſame reaſon for daily prayer, as for daily labor. We are dependent on God, and we know this dependence; and it is as reaſonable that we ſhould expreſs our ſenſe of dependence by prayer, as that we ſhould expreſs our ſenſe of want by labor. If we have deſires, to whom ſhall we direct them, but to him who can ſupply all our need?

Prayer is a mean of enlivening our pious ſentiments and exciting us to the practice of duty, and

thus of preparing us to receive divine favors. In ſhort, it is founded in the ſame reaſons, as love to God, the fear of him and truſt in him. It is founded in his perfections and providence, and our relation to him and dependence on him. And you may as well aſk, what reaſon there is to love, fear and truſt God, as what reaſon there is to praiſe him and pray to him. The former is the temper of a pious ſoul; the latter is the exerciſe and expreſſion of that temper. We may obſerve,

II. Prayer is of ſeveral *kinds*, ſocial and ſecret, public and domeſtic, ſtated and occaſional: And it conſiſts of ſeveral *parts*, confeſſion, ſupplication, interceſſion and thankſgiving. The Apoſtle here points out no part or kind of prayer in diſtinction from all others, but exhorts us in general to pray with *all* prayer.

He ſeems, however, to have a more ſpecial regard to *domeſtic* or *family* prayer. He had juſt been treating on the relative duties, as thoſe between huſband and wife, parent and children, maſter and ſervants; and the exhortation to prayer, immediately ſubjoined, may moſt naturally be underſtood as reſpecting that ſocial exerciſe of devotion which families ſhould maintain.

Family prayer was a uſage obſerved by the ancient patriarchs, by pious Jews and by the early Chriſtians. It was a practice well known in the Apoſtle's day. The expreſſion, therefore, "Pray with *all* prayer," muſt include *this*.

Among the Jews there was a daily ſacrifice, offered, part in the morning and part in the evening. This was called "the *continual* ſacrifice." The hours of this ſacrifice were conſidered as "hours of *prayer*." In alluſion to *this*, the Apoſtle directs Chriſtians to "pray *without ceaſing*," and to "offer the ſacrifice of praiſe *continually*." Theſe words therefore, "Pray *always* with *all prayer*," clearly

and ſtrongly enjoin on families the ſtated maintenance of *morning* and *evening* prayer.

III. The Apoſtle next inſtructs us concerning the *manner* in which our prayers ſhould be offered. "Pray with all prayer and ſupplication in *the ſpirit*, and *watch* thereunto with all *perſeverance*."

The ſpirit and temper of the heart in our prayers, is the main thing neceſſary to qualify them for God's acceptance. Thoſe hypocrites, who draw near to him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him, worſhip him in vain.

The firſt thing neceſſary in prayer, is *faith*, or a believing view of God's providential government, and of the wiſdom and goodneſs with which it is adminiſtered. "Without this faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him." And as he has appointed a Mediator through whom we, unworthy creatures, may approach his throne, all our prayers muſt be preſented to him in the name of this Mediator. Our ſpiritual ſacrifices are acceptable to God through Jeſus Chriſt; and whatever we do in word or deed, we muſt do all in his name.

Our deſires muſt be good and reaſonable.—"This is the confidence which we have in God, that if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have the petitions that we deſired of him." There are ſome, "who aſk and receive not." And the reaſon is, "They aſk amiſs, that they may conſume it on their luſts."

Attention of mind, *collection* of thought and *warmth* of affection, are qualifications required in prayer. Theſe are implied in our *watching* unto prayer—in our attending upon God *without diſtraction*—in our *engaging the heart* to approach him—in our praying with the *Spirit*, and with a *fervent* ſpirit.

We muſt ſerve God with *reverence* and *godly fear*; for "he is greatly to be feared in the aſſembly of his ſaints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him." "We muſt not be raſh with our mouth, nor haſty to utter any thing before him, for he is in heaven, and we upon earth." "He humbles himſelf to behold the things which are in heaven." "The angels vail their faces before him." What are we that he ſhould be mindful of us?—He is high, but he has reſpect to the lowly; and gives grace to the humble.

That our prayers may be acceptable to God, they muſt be accompanied with *juſtice* to men. God ſays to the Jews, "When ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes; when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; for your hands are full of blood. Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings." Of the Phariſees, "who made long prayers, and devoured widows' houſes," Chriſt ſays, "They ſhall receive greater damnation."

Charity is an eſſential qualification in prayer. "When ye ſtand praying, forgive, if ye have ought againſt any man, that your heavenly Father may forgive you." "Be ſober and watch unto prayer, and above all things have fervent charity among yourſelves."

We muſt bring before the throne of God a *meek* and *peaceable* Spirit. This is the direction of the goſpel: "Be like minded one toward another, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God—ſtudy the things which make for peace—and receive ye one another, as Chriſt hath received us."

Our prayers muſt be accompanied with a *ſenſe* of, and *ſorrow* for ſin. For "if we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us." "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry; but his face is againſt

them who do evil. He is nigh to them who are of a broken heart; but evil shall slay the wicked."

We are to "*continue* in prayer, and watch thereunto with all *perseverance*"—"to pray always and not to faint." It is "by *faith* and *patience* that we receive the promises." In our prayers for pardon, grace and glory, we may adopt the language of the patriarch; "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." We are to "seek until we find." Our prayers for temporal benefits, however importunate, should be accompanied with submission to the unknown will of God, and to his perfect wisdom which can judge for us better than we can judge for ourselves. In prayer Christ has taught us to say, "Our Father—thy will be done." I proceed to observe,

IV. The Apostle here teaches us the duty of *intercession* for others. "Pray—with supplication for all saints, and for me——."

The goodness of God is the foundation of prayer. If God is good to others, as well as to us, there is the same ground on which to offer our social intercessions, as our personal petitions. The acceptableness of prayer much depends on our real desires of the things for which we pray. Intercession is therefore, the most excellent part of prayer, because it is the most remote from selfishness, and implies the greatest degree of charity and disinterestedness. It is an expression of our desire for the happiness of others.

Good will to men is a necessary qualification in our prayers for personal blessings; and prayers dictated purely by this principle are peculiarly acceptable to God.

Some will ask, "What reason is there why we should pray for others? Will not God do good to men without our importunity?"

This question is the same as if you should ask, "What reason is there, why we should love our

neighbors? If you ought to love them, you ought to deſire and ſeek their good; and if you believe, they are dependent on God for the bleſſings which they need, then you ought, in their behalf, to direct your deſires and make your requeſts to him.

Yea, you may as well aſk, "What occaſion is there for alms to the poor, inſtruction to the ignorant, or relief to the afflicted?" God can feed the hungry, guide the ſimple and comfort the ſorrowful without our good offices, as well as without our prayers: And the ſucceſs of our works of charity, as well as of our prayers, depends on his favor.

The truth is, God is good to all, and he exerciſes his goodneſs in ſuch a manner as his wiſdom ſees beſt. Benevolence is an important virtue; and God has placed us in a connexion with each other, that there may be occaſion for the frequent operations of it. He requires us to do good as we have opportunity. Without a diſpoſition to do good, our prayers are vain, for they are not ſincere. Where this diſpoſition exiſts, it will operate both in works of beneficence, and in friendly interceſſions. The moral government of God is a ſyſtem of benevolence; and he ſo adminiſters it, as to encourage mutual benevolence among his ſubjects.

We are not to imagine, however, that he will withhold from good men, the bleſſings for which they are prepared, merely becauſe others neglect to pray for them. But if he grants to unworthy creatures the favors to which they have no claim, this certainly is an act of Grace; and it is not the leſs grace, becauſe he grants them on the interceſſion of others.

We are commanded to pray for *all men*. We can by direct acts of beneficence do good only to few; but our charitable wiſhes may embrace millions, even diſtant nations and unborn generations. By the example and precepts of Chriſt we are taught to "love our enemies, and pray for thoſe

who deſpitefully uſe us." If ſuch are ſubjects of our prayers, none are to be excluded.

As we cannot have a diſtinct knowledge of the caſes of all men, our prayers for them muſt be general, "that they may be ſaved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

The *general* ſtate of mankind is well known. Many nations are in the darkneſs of Heatheniſm—many are deluded by vain impoſture—many are miſled by a corrupted Chriſtianity—among thoſe who enjoy the pure goſpel many are blinded by the god of this world. A great part of the human race are under the power of an arbitrary domination, and employed in butchering one another, merely to gratify the pride of wanton tyrants. Among the millions, who are impelled to aſſume the inſtruments of death, and ſpread devaſtation and carnage among their fellow mortals, not one in ten thouſand has any intereſt in the quarrel, or any knowledge of the man againſt whom he lifts the fatal weapon, or has received any injury from him whom he devotes to deſtruction. They are by dint of power, urged into a bloody conteſt, in which they have no concern, and from which they expect no benefit. They are employed to deſtroy thoſe who have never voluntarily harmed mankind, and who wiſh to enjoy the innocent retreats of peace.

The benevolent and diſcerning mind looks on the human race with compaſſion, and prays that the time may come, when light ſhall break forth and overſpread the world; when truth ſhall ariſe and gain its juſt dominion; when tyranny ſhall withdraw its cruel hand and give place to equity and juſtice; and when all nations ſhall be united in bonds of friendſhip and peace.

The Apoſtle exhorts Chriſtians eſpecially to make ſupplication for *all ſaints*."

Chriſtians were then in a ſtate of peculiar danger; either actually conflicting with, or imminent-

ly expoſed to the violence of perſecution. They were in a weak and defenceleſs ſtate, not only without the ſupport, but under the oppreſſion of the powers of the world. They therefore needed the protection of providence to preſerve them from ſpeedy deſtruction, and the influence of grace to fortify them againſt the temptations to apoſtacy.

Beſides: The Chriſtian inſtitution was of infinite importance to the world. Hence to pray for the ſaints, for their ſupport and for the ſpread of their religion, was to pray for the general virtue and happineſs of the human race, in that and all ſucceeding ages.

If we believe the religion of the goſpel to be true and important, we ought not only to profeſs and obey it ourſelves, but alſo to contribute to its ſucceſs and influence among others. There is, therefore, at all times, as well as in times of perſecution, ſpecial reaſon why Chriſtians in every place ſhould make ſupplication for all ſaints. The Apoſtle ſays to the Theſſalonians, "We pray always for you, that God would fulfil in you all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and that the name of Chriſt may be glorified in you, and ye in him. And pray ye for us, that the word of the Lord may have free courſe and be glorified, even as it is among you."

This leads me farther to obſerve, That the Apoſtle ſolicits the prayers of the Epheſian Chriſtians for *himſelf*, as a *miniſter* of Chriſt. "Pray for *me*." Paul was a man of great natural abilities, and literary acquirements, of eminent grace and uncommon gifts; but he did not imagine that theſe raiſed him above the need of farther aſſiſtances and ſupplies. He prayed for himſelf, and he requeſted the prayers of his brethren. Humility becomes the moſt eminent ſaints. Improvements in grace conduce to lowlineſs of mind.

Chriſtians ought to pray for their miniſter.—Their edification and comfort, and the prevalence

of piety in the riſing generation much depend on his fidelity and ſucceſs. When people complain of their miniſter's inſufficiency or uſeleſſneſs, it would be proper for them to inquire, whether they have done their duty to him and to themſelves; whether they have attended on his miniſtry with conſtancy, received the word from him with meekneſs, aſſiſted him by their concurrence, and remembered him in their prayers.

There was ſomething ſpecial in Paul's caſe. He was "an ambaſſador in *bonds*." He was ſent forth by God to treat with men on terms of peace. "We are ambaſſadors of Chriſt," ſays he, "as though God did beſeech you by us; we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God." You are to regard the miniſters of Chriſt as his ambaſſadors. Your oppoſition to them in this character, is oppoſition to him: If you deſpiſe them, you deſpiſe him.

Among all nations, ambaſſadors, acting in their office, are conſidered as having a claim to perſonal ſecurity. But Paul, though an ambaſſador, was in bonds. The enemies of Chriſt had confined this meſſenger, to reſtrain him from delivering the meſſage with which he was charged. He therefore requeſts the prayers of the ſaints, that he may be enlarged to go forth and proclaim to rebellious men the things which belong to their peace. People ought eſpecially to help their miniſter by their prayers and charities, when he is under ſuch worldly embarraſſments as obſtruct the free exerciſe of his office.

V. The Apoſtle points out the *manner*, in which he aimed, and all miniſters ought to preach the goſpel. "Pray for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the myſtery of the goſpel, that I may ſpeak boldly, as I ought to ſpeak."

What Paul preached was "the *myſtery* of the goſpel"—the myſtery which had been hidden from former ages, but was now made manifeſt. There are many doctrines of religion, which could not be known without revelation, but appear eaſy to be underſtood, and reaſonable to be believed, whenever they are diſcovered; as the incarnation and ſacrifice of Chriſt, the pardoning mercy of God, the reſurrection of the body and a future judgment. In reference to theſe the goſpel is called a *myſtery*—a myſtery not kept ſecret, but made manifeſt to the ſons of men.

The Apoſtle deſired to *make known* this myſtery. A miniſter ſhould "uſe great plainneſs of ſpeech, and by manifeſtation of the truth commend himſelf to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God." Addreſſes to the paſſions, when the mind is uninformed, are uſeleſs, and may be dangerous. Let the underſtanding firſt be enlightened in the knowledge of the truth; then the conſcience and feelings may be addreſſed with propriety and advantage.

The Apoſtle prayed "that he might ſpeak *boldly*, as he ought to ſpeak."

In a miniſter *boldneſs* is neceſſary—not that impudent boldneſs, which aſſumes an unmerited ſuperiority; but that pious fortitude, which dares to utter the important things of religion without reſerve, and without fear of perſonal inconvenience. Paul declared the whole counſel of God. He never declined to ſpeak, or ſtudied to diſguiſe the truth, that he might gain the favor, or eſcape the cenſure of the world; but ſtill he was careful not to give needleſs offence, or awaken the dangerous oppoſition of paſſion and prejudice. His manner of addreſs was reſpectful and winning; but not ſervile and fawning. He was bold without inſolence, and delicate without diſguiſe.

The miniſter muſt exhort and rebuke with all authority, and ſometimes uſe ſharpneſs: But he muſt not ſtrive. He muſt be gentle toward all men, in meekneſs inſtructing them who oppoſe themſelves, that they may come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth.

He muſt open his mouth boldly to declare the great doctrines of ſalvation, to confute dangerous errors, to convince gainſayers, to ſilence vain talkers, to teſtify againſt iniquity, to reprove the ungodly, and to detect and alarm ſelfdeluding hypocrites.

He muſt perſevere in the faithful execution of his office, whatever diſcouragements may ariſe from the oppoſition of the world, the frowns of the great, the contempt of the proud, the want of concurrence, or the ſmallneſs of his ſucceſs. The Spirit which governs him muſt be, "not the Spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of power, love and a ſound mind."

His courage muſt be accompanied with prudence, humility and charity; not with raſhneſs, pride and cenſoriouſneſs: And his confidence muſt be grounded, not in a vain conceit of his own abilities; but in the goodneſs of his cauſe, the importance of truth and the ſupport of divine grace.

We ſee that the office of a miniſter is difficult, as well as important. He may need more wiſdom and fortitude than he poſſeſſes. As he ſhould ſeek grace to guide and ſtrengthen him, ſo he may reaſonably expect a ſhare in the interceſſions of thoſe for whom he labors. Whatever neglects they impute to him, if they forbear to mention him in their prayers, they may charge themſelves with one criminal neglect.

We ſee that private Chriſtians ſhould zealouſly concur with their miniſter in his labors to promote religion. Their concurrence animates him to ſpeak the word boldly. They ſhould receive the word

from him with readineſs of mind, maintain religion in their houſes, ſecond his addreſſes to the young, preſerve peace and order among themſelves, and in their daily converſation hold forth the word of life, that he may not run in vain.

We ſee the vaſt importance of the goſpel. Why has God appointed miniſters to preach it? Why are they to ſpeak it boldly? Why are they to inſtruct and reprove with all longſuffering? It is becauſe the ſubject of it is great, and infinitely concerns the ſons of men.

Now if it be a matter of ſuch importance, can you ſafely neglect it? The miniſter who ſhuns to declare the counſel of God, you think, endangers his ſoul. Do not you endanger your own ſouls, when you reject this counſel? If it concerns a miniſter to labor for your ſalvation, ought you not to labor for your own?—No pains taken by others will ſave you, while you diſregard your own duty. Awake then to conſideration and repentance; attend on God's word, and apply with diligence all the means in your hands. Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him, while he is near.

SERMON XLIX.

EPHESIANS vi. 21, 22, 23.

But that ye may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful miniſter in the Lord, ſhall make known to you all things; whom I have ſent unto you for this ſame purpoſe, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

THE Apoſtle, in the preceding verſe, ſays, that, "for the goſpel's ſake, he was an ambaſſador in bonds." He was appointed an ambaſſador of Chriſt to publiſh the goſpel of peace to a guilty world. In the execution of this commiſſion he was apprehended and put in chains. The place of his confinement was the city of Rome. From thence he wrote to ſeveral churches, and particularly to the church of the Epheſians, among whom he had before ſpent ſome time in preaching the goſpel. His letter to this church he ſent by the hand of Tychicus, who was not only a Chriſtian, but a miniſter, and an aſſiſtant to Paul in the work of the goſpel. In his letter he mentions this meſſenger by name, informs the Epheſians for what purpoſe he had ſent him, and recommends him to them as a beloved brother and faithful miniſter. He then

expreſſes the benevolent deſires of his heart, that God would grant them peace and love, as the fruits of that faith, which they profeſſed in Chriſt Jeſus.

The paragraph now read I ſhall improve in ſeveral obſervations.

I. Paul was careful to keep up an intercourſe and communion with the churches of Chriſt.

While he was at Rome, he ſent a brother to carry a meſſage to the Epheſians. By the ſame hand he ſent a letter to the Coloſſians. He directed that the ſame letter ſhould be read to the church in Laodicea; and that they alſo ſhould read the letter from Laodicea. He inſcribed this letter "to the ſaints in Epheſus, and to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus."

We hence learn, that there ought to be a fellowſhip and correſpondence among the churches of Chriſt. They ſhould all unite their endeavors for the common edification and comfort.

The church of Chriſt is one. And though for the convenience of ſocial worſhip, it is formed into various ſocieties, yet it is not divided. It is ſtill one body; and all its ſeveral members, as there is occaſion and opportunity, ſhould conſpire to the promotion of the general peace and happineſs. Different churches, like the different members of the body, ſhould act in concert, and move as being animated by the ſame Spirit. If one ſuffers, others ſhould contribute to its relief; if one is honored, all ſhould partake in the joy.

We are to acknowledge all as our brethren, who, in every place, call on the name of Jeſus Chriſt the Lord, both theirs and ours. We ſhould be free, as to commune with other churches, ſo to admit them to communion with us, ſtatedly or occaſionally, as circumſtances allow. We ſhould ſeek the counſel of ſiſter churches under our difficulties; and be ready, when requeſted, to afford them our counſel under theirs. Thus we ſhould keep the unity of

the Spirit in the bond of peace, and be fellow helpers to the truth.

We ſee then, that ſuch as form themſelves into ſeparate ſocieties, with a view to withdraw themſelves from the communion of other churches, and to exclude other churches from theirs, eſſentially depart from the pacific and benevolent plan of the goſpel.

II. Paul was ſolicitous, that the Chriſtians, among whom he had preached, ſhould "know his ſtate."

He ſent to the Epheſians a meſſenger, from whom they might know his affairs. And what were his affairs?—He was a priſoner of Jeſus Chriſt in the cauſe of the goſpel. He was in bonds; but ſtill he maintained his faith and courage. He was not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, nor afraid to avow his belief of it, though bonds, afflictions and death might be the conſequence.

He ſent to the Chriſtian churches an account of his ſtate, that they might be moved to pray for him—might know how to accommodate their prayers to his caſe—might not be terrified by his ſufferings, but rather emboldened by his example of fortitude—and that his inſtructions and exhortations might come with greater power, being written in a ſtate of affliction, and dictated by that ſpirit which ſupported him in all his tribulation.

It is often proper for Chriſtians to communicate to each other their inward and outward troubles, that they may enjoy the benefit of each other's advice and prayers.

It concerns Chriſtians under afflictions, eſpecially under trials, on account of religion, to maintain a conſtancy and fortitude, which may do honor to religion, and recommend it to the choice and eſteem of others.

III. Paul ſent to inform the Epheſians, not only what were his affairs, but "what he was doing"—how he employed himſelf in his confinement.

He ſuffered not his time to paſs in reſtleſs impatience, or uſeleſs indolence. He knew how to be contented in bonds—He could ſtill be active in promoting the cauſe of Chriſt, and the ſalvation of men. He received all who came to him, and preached to them the kingdom of God, and the things which concerned the Lord Jeſus, with all confidence. He inſtructed his fellow priſoners, and, in ſome inſtances, was ſo happy as to reclaim them from a vicious life, and bring them to the faith of the goſpel. It was at Rome, in his bonds, that he recovered Oneſimus from a profligate courſe, and made him, who in time paſt had been unprofitable, now profitable to all who were connected with him. He ſpent much of his time in prayer for the churches. He ſays, "He prayed for them always—without ceaſing—night and day." He was induſtrious in writing to the churches, and to particular perſons. Several of his epiſtles, beſides this, were written, when he was in bonds. His confinement turned to the furtherance of the goſpel, as it gave occaſion for a number of moſt excellent epiſtles, which are of ſtanding uſe and importance in the churches. If Paul had only preached, we ſhould, at this time, ſcarcely have known what he did preach. We ſhould not have been favored with thoſe books, which are ſome of the moſt inſtructive parts of holy ſcripture. The wiſdom of God diſpoſes things in ſuch a manner, as leads to the accompliſhment of his own purpoſes.

Time ſo piouſly and uſefully ſpent, as Paul's time was, may be pleaſant, even in a priſon. He was willing the churches ſhould know what he did. He was not aſhamed that his manner of life ſhould be made public. Do not many ſo ſpend their time, that they are almoſt aſhamed to review it them-

ſelves ; and would be more aſhamed to let *others* know, what they do ?

Paul's example teaches us, that we ſhould do good in every condition. Even confinement excuſes not from works of piety and beneficence.—Under particular circumſtances we may be incapable of the ſervices, which we wiſh to perform ; but perhaps, under theſe circumſtances, we may do more good, than if we were in that condition of life, which we think moſt eligible, and moſt favorable to our uſefulneſs. Let us only be ſolicitous to do good, in every ſtate, according to our ability ; and thus leave it with God to order our affairs, as his wiſdom ſees beſt.

IV. When Paul ſends Tychicus to Epheſus, and to Coloſſee, he gives him written teſtimonials, that he might be received of the churches, in the character of a miniſter. " I ſend Tychicus, who *is* a beloved brother and faithful miniſter in the Lord."

If you read, with attention, the Acts, and the Epiſtles of the apoſtles, you will find, that they who undertook to preach the goſpel, were approved and ſeparated to that work by men already in office ;—and that theſe preachers, when they travelled abroad, carried with them written recommendations from ſome known apoſtle, miniſter, or church.—This precaution was taken, that the churches might not be impoſed upon by ignorant pretenders, or artful deceivers.

This early example teaches us, that, whenever miniſters go forth to preach the goſpel, in places where their names and characters are unknown, they ought to exhibit proper evidences of their authority to preach, and of their good ſtanding in the church of Chriſt ; and that, without ſuch evidences, they ought not to be received in that ſacred character. [The church of Epheſus is commended, becauſe ſhe tried them, who ſaid they were apoſtles and were not, and found them liars. On the con-

trary, the church of Thyatira is reproved, becauſe ſhe ſuffered thoſe to teach, who called themſelves prophets, but could produce no teſtimony in ſupport of their character. The conſequence of this credulity and negligence was, that theſe pretended prophets ſeduced the ſervants of Chriſt from the purity and order of the goſpel.

The church of Chriſt is a regular, organized community. The work of miniſters is to build up this community in knowledge, peace and holineſs. The qualifications for the miniſtry, the manner of introduction to the office, and the duties which belong to it, the goſpel has clearly ſtated. We are to receive none as ambaſſadors of Chriſt, but thoſe who come to us, according to the order which he has ſettled. All are not teachers in his church :— He has given *ſome* to be teachers. We are not to ſuppoſe, that every man, at his own pleaſure, may aſſume the office, or that we are to acknowledge, in the office, every man who does aſſume it. If any man offers himſelf to us in the character of a Chriſtian teacher, on *him* it is incumbent to exhibit proof of his Chriſtian ſtanding and official authority.— If we give heed to every vain pretender, and countenance every bold intruder, we bring confuſion into the church, where all things ought to be done decently and in order.

V. The miniſters of Chriſt ought to act in concert and unite their labors in building up his kingdom.

Tychicus cooperates with Paul in the work of the miniſtry ; Paul therefore ſends him to the churches to which he himſelf had miniſtered, and calls him a faithful miniſter and fellow ſervant in the Lord.

There ought to be, among miniſters, unity of affection, correſpondence of deſign, and concurrence of labors. There ſhould be no contention for ſuperiority ; no undermining arts ; no attempts o magnify their importance at the expenſe of their

brethrens' uſefulneſs. Paul would not enter into the labors, or build on the foundation of other men. He would not ſtretch himſelf beyond his line. But then, in an orderly way, he would impart to, and receive from his brethren, all proper aſſiſtance in promoting the common cauſe. Miniſters ſhould ſtrengthen the hands, and animate the hearts of one another, and thus be fellow helpers to the truth.

VI. *Fidelity* is an eſſential part of the miniſterial character. Paul ſays of Tychicus, "He is a *faithful* miniſter."—"It is required in ſtewards, that a man be found *faithful*." Timothy is charged to "commit the things which he had received, unto *faithful* men."

The faithful miniſter undertakes his work with pure intentions and abides in it with conſtancy, even though he may meet with wordly diſcouragements. His governing aim is to approve himſelf to God, and promote the eſſential intereſt of his fellow men. He applies himſelf to the various duties of his office with aſſiduity and diligence. He ſhuns not to declare the whole counſel of God.—He handles not the word of God deceitfully, but uſes great plainneſs of ſpeech, and, by manifeſtation of the truth, commends himſelf to the conſciences of his hearers. Such a faithful paſtor, when the great ſhepherd ſhall appear, will receive the crown of life. Though his people ſhould not be gathered, yet he will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and his God will be his ſtrength.

VII. Paul ſent Tychicus to the Epheſians, "that he might comfort their hearts."

The apoſtle was in bonds for the goſpel. Apprehenſive, that theſe new converts might by his ſufferings be diſcouraged in their religion, and turned away from their profeſſion, he ſends this meſſenger to animate and confirm them. He ſays, in the third chapter, "I Paul, the priſoner of the

Lord for you Gentiles—deſire that ye faint not at my tribulation for you, which is your glory. For this cauſe I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he would grant you to be ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man"—"I the priſoner of the Lord beſeech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."—Tychicus was ſent on the ſame deſign, to comfort them under their grief for Paul's impriſonment, and to guard them againſt any diſcouraging apprehenſions from ſo unhappy an event.

Miniſters are to ſtrengthen new converts and young profeſſors to conſtancy and perſeverance in religion, by laying before them the comforting and animating motives of the goſpel.

Chriſtians often meet with diſcouragements from external afflictions—from the preſſure of temptations—from the ſtrength of inward corruptions—from a conſciouſneſs of infirmity—from their unſucceſsfulneſs in ſtriving againſt ſin—from the want of bright evidences of their ſincerity—from the coldneſs of their hearts in ſpiritual duties—and from the inconſtancy of their good reſolutions.—We are to comfort deſponding ſouls, not by bold pretenſions to know their ſpiritual ſtate and their title to heaven, but by propoſing to them thoſe ſcriptural marks and characters, by which they may prove their own hearts, and judge their own ſtate. We are to put them in the way to obtain comfort, by aſſiſting them in the trial of themſelves, and by encouraging them to diligence and perſeverance in religion. We are to lead their minds to the contemplation of the divine promiſes, and to inſtruct them how they may apply theſe promiſes to themſelves. We are to remind them of the abundant grace of God, and invite their approach to his throne for grace to help in time of need.—We are eſpecially to animate and ſtrengthen them

from the particular promiſes, made to thoſe who patiently continue in well doing.

Miniſters ſhould apply the comforts and terrors of the goſpel to the proper characters; and direct their hearers, on a ſtrict examination of their own hearts, to make the application for themſelves. If we take upon us to apply promiſes or threatenings to *perſons*, inſtead of characters, we ſhall often miſapply them, or if we give a falſe deſcription of religion, we ſhall lead our hearers to miſapply them. Thus we ſhall bring on ourſelves the curſe denounced againſt thoſe corrupt teachers, "who with their lies make the hearts of the righteous ſad, whom God hath not made ſad; and who ſtrengthen the hands of the wicked, that he return not from his wicked way, by promiſing him life."

Finally: The Apoſtle here points out the way in which Chriſtians are to receive religious comfort. They are to abound in that peace and love, which are the fruits of faith. "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

They had already profeſſed their *faith* in the goſpel of Chriſt. The Apoſtle prays, that, with their faith, there might be *peace* and *love*. Theſe are the genuine effects of true faith, and from theſe ſpring religious comfort and joy. For the Theſſalonian believers Paul gives thanks, "remembering their work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope." Where faith works, love will alſo labor, and hope will patiently wait for a reward. As faith increaſes, love will abound, and hope be ſtrengthened. Hence the Apoſtle prays, "The Lord make you to increaſe and abound in love toward one another, and toward all men, to the end he may eſtabliſh your hearts unblameable in holineſs before God, at the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

"The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, a good conſcience and faith un-



feigned." The goſpel by its precepts enjoins, by its examples recommends, and by its doctrines urges mutual love, as the nobleſt branch of the Chriſtian temper; and faith captivates the ſoul into obedience to the goſpel by giving efficacy to its precepts, examples and doctrines. Love is ſo eſſential to the religion of Chriſt, that where it is wanting, all pretenſions to faith are vain. They who by Chriſt have believed in God, are ſaid "to have purified their ſouls unto unfeigned love of the brethren."

Where faith operates, love will appear, and *peace* will follow.

Love firſt produces *inward* peace. It extinguiſhes malice, envy, hatred, wrath, revenge, and every unfriendly paſſion—every unſocial feeling. It operates by meekneſs under provocations—by the forgiveneſs of injuries—by condeſcenſion in caſes of controverſy—by compaſſion to the afflicted—by beneficence to the needy—by righteouſneſs in dealings—by tenderneſs of mens' characters—by joy in the proſperity of neighbors, and by a promptitude in relieving the diſtreſſes and promoting the happineſs of mankind.

Such are the works and fruits of love; and where this prevails there will be peace in the mind. Of conſequence, when this grace reigns among Chriſtians, there will be *ſocial* peace. They will bear one another's burden, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt. They will be careful not to give offence, either by real injuries, or unneceſſary differences—by obſtinacy in their own opinions or a contemptuous treatment of the opinions of others. They will be ſlow to take offence. They will not credulouſly ſuſpect, or ſuddenly reſent injuries, nor magnify into crimes their neighbors' trivial errors. If a variance happens, they will be forward to make peace, by explaining their miſconſtrued behavior—by retracing their exceptionable words

or actions—by liſtening to overtures of accommodation—by accepting reaſonable conceſſions—and by exerciſing forbearance, where a diverſity of ſentiment remains. They will uſe their friendly offices to compoſe differences among others, and to turn away the anger which awakens contention. They will ſtudiouſly avoid that open talebearing, and that ſecret whiſpering which often ſeparates the neareſt friends.

Thus love produces peace, firſt in the breaſt where it dwells, and then in the ſociety where it reigns.

This ſpirit of love brings religious comfort.

Love is comfortable in its immediate feelings, and in its pacific influence. The Apoſtle ſays, "If there be any comfort of love, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded." The pleaſures of ſociety ſpring from peace and love.

Love brings comfort to the ſoul, as it is an evidence of godly ſincerity. "By this we know that we have paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren."—"By this ſhall mankind know that we are Chriſt's diſciples, becauſe we love one another." "In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the devil: Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." "Let us love, not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth—hereby we know that we are of the truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before God."

If we would enjoy the comfort, we muſt maintain the temper of religion. To look for religious comfort in any other way, is contrary to the deſign of the goſpel. And comfort, that comes in any other way, is deluſive and tranſient. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment.

Peace and love come from God. They are the fruits of his Spirit. While we attend to the precepts and doctrines of the goſpel for inſtruction in,



and excitement to our duty, we muſt pray for the work of the divine Spirit in our ſouls, to form them more and more to the temper of peace and love, and thus to fill them with hope and joy.

The wiſdom, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, is wiſdom from above. If we lack wiſdom, let us aſk it of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not; remembering, that every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs, nor ſhadow of turning.

If we of his good will have been begotten by the word of truth, it is that we may be a kind of firſt-fruits of his creatures. Let us therefore be ſwift to hear, ſlow to ſpeak, ſlow to wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God. And let us lay apart all filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs, and receive with meekneſs the ingrafted word, which is able to ſave our ſouls.

Thus may peace and love with faith be multiplied to us, from God the Father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.——*Amen.*

SERMON L.

EPHESIANS vi. 24.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity.

ST. PAUL, though a man of liberal education, ſeems not to have been expert in writing the Greek characters; for which reaſon he uſually employed an amanuenſis. He ſpeaks of it as ſomething extraordinary for him to write with his own hand, a letter ſo large as that to the Galatians. But though he uſually dictated his letters to a Scribe, yet he always took care to ſubjoin to them, with his own hand, a form of ſalutation, by which the genuineneſs of them was aſcertained. His ſecond epiſtle to the Theſſalonians he thus concludes, "The ſalutation of Paul, *with mine own hand*," a hand well known, or eaſy to be known by comparing it with his other writings, "which is the token in every letter, ſo I write: The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you." When this ſalutation, in Paul's hand, was ſeen at the cloſe of an epiſtle, it was known that the epiſtle was from him.

As Paul, ſo doubtleſs the other ſacred writers, took immediate care to prove their works to be genuine, and to prevent ſpurious writings from be-

ing palmed on the churches under their names. Hence we may conclude, that the churches from the beginning, had ſufficient evidence, that the ſacred books were written by the men, whoſe names they bear.

The books of the New Teſtament appear to have been written in the time when their reputed authors lived. They were at that time publicly known and received as the genuine works of thoſe men. They were acknowledged as ſuch in the next age, both by friends and enemies. They have been conveyed to us by an uninterrupted ſeries of vouchers. They muſt therefore be regarded as the genuine works of the men, to whom they are aſcribed.

This ſignature, which Paul affixes to his epiſtles, ſpeaks the goodneſs and benevolence of his heart. "The love of Chriſt be with you all." But while he wiſhes to all the grace of Chriſt for their eternal ſalvation, he reminds them, that in order to obtain this grace, they muſt love the author of it in ſincerity. "If any man love not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, he will be accurſed when the Lord ſhall come."

Our text leads us to conſider, in what reſpects Chriſt is an *object* of our love—what it is to love him *in ſincerity*—how a ſincere love to Chriſt will *diſcover* itſelf—and the *benediction* connected with this love.

I. We will conſider on what accounts Chriſt is entitled to our love.

Love, which is the inclination and attachment of the ſoul toward an object, ſuppoſes an apprehenſion of ſomething which is good and excellent in that object.

Jeſus Chriſt once dwelt on earth, and there were thoſe who ſaw him and beheld his glory. But he is now gone to the inviſible world, and we behold

en as our forerunner and interceſſor, ſhall we not admire ſuch high and unexampled goodneſs? "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to receive honor, and glory, and bleſſing, for he hath redeemed us to God by his blood." Love contemplating Chriſt as a divine benefactor, operates in a way of gratitude and hope.

II. The Apoſtle inſerts an eſſential qualification of love to Chriſt, which is *ſincerity*.

The ſincerity of our love implies, that it be real, univerſal, ſupreme, perſevering and active.

Our love to Chriſt muſt be *real*, not pretended. There are ſome, who, while they profeſs to eſteem him, are in heart enemies to him. True love is a temper conformed to his goſpel, and aſſimilated to his character. While the love of ſin reigns in us, we ſhall not embrace him as one who came to ſave us from ſin. As a Savior from miſery he may appear deſirable, but as a Savior from ſin he is lovely to thoſe only who hate ſin, and long for deliverance from it.

Our love to Chriſt muſt be *univerſal*; it muſt reſpect his whole character. Many, when they conſider him as one who came to ranſom the guilty from deſtruction, rejoice in him, and are pleaſed with the thought, that ſuch a Savior has appeared. But when they view him as the ruler and judge of men, as one who commands all men to repent, who has revealed the wrath of God againſt all impenitent ſinners; their hearts riſe againſt him, and their inward language is, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The true believer regards and loves Chriſt in the view in which the goſpel exhibits him, not only as a redeemer from miſery, but as a teacher of righteouſneſs; not only as a propitiation for ſin, but as a pattern of holineſs. He not only appreciates Chriſt's gracious promiſes, but juſtifies his awful threatenings; and he deſires as well to be ſanctified from his pollutions by



the influence of Chriſt's grace, as to be ſaved from wrath by the merit of his blood.

Sincere love to Chriſt is *ſupreme*. It gives him the preference to all earthly intereſts and connexions. Thus the Savior himſelf has taught us, "He that loveth father or mother, ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."—"If any man come to me, and hate not," or do not comparatively diſeſteem "his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and ſiſters, yea, and his own life alſo, he cannot be my diſciple." We muſt love Chriſt more than theſe.

Sincere love is *perſevering*. It holds out againſt temptations, lives amidſt worldly cares and operates in times of affliction. It is a flame, which waters cannot quench, nor floods drown. They whom Chriſt owns as his diſciples, are ſuch as continue in his love—ſuch as abide in him, and have his word abiding in them.

Finally: True love to Chriſt is *active*. It is not a cold and indolent opinion of him; but ſuch a ſenſible regard to him as intereſts the heart, and influences the life. There is "the labor of love," as well as "the work of faith." I proceed to ſhew,

III. How ſincere love to Chriſt will *diſcover* itſelf.

This will make us careful to *pleaſe* him. Our obedience is the proper evidence of a regard for his character. "If a man love me," ſays he, "he will keep may ſayings: He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you."

This holy principle will be accompanied with *humility*. When we diſcern the amiableneſs of Chriſt's character, we ſhall think ſoberly of our own. When we ſee what human nature was in him, we ſhall be aſhamed to think, what it is in us. Our value for his favor will awaken a cautious

fear, leſt we fail of it. Paul, under the influence of this principle, was jealous of himſelf, leſt by any means he ſhould be a caſtaway.

We are fond of *imitating* thoſe whom we love. If we love Chriſt, we ſhall follow his ſteps, and walk as he walked.

Our love to him will animate us to promote his intereſt, and oppoſe his enemies. He has purchaſed a church with his blood. For the ſake of this he is made head over all things. The enlargement of his church, the increaſe of converts to his religion, the ſpread and influence of his goſpel, the promotion of knowledge and holineſs, peace and charity, and the ſuppreſſion of wickedneſs and error, are intereſts which he much regards. To advance theſe intereſts, we are to be workers together with him. We are to profeſs our ſubmiſſion to his government, and belief of his goſpel. We are to bear teſtimony againſt the corrupt opinions and practices of the world. We are to employ our influence for the reformation and enlargement of his kingdom, and for the encouragement and confirmation of thoſe who would join themſelves to it. We are to ſtudy the things which make for peace, and by which we may edify one another. Thus we are to expreſs our love to the Savior. When Peter profeſſed his love, Chriſt ſaid to him, "Feed my lambs—feed my ſheep."

We are to ſhew our love to the Savior by *doing good* to his needy *brethren* and *friends*. Theſe we have always with us, and whenſoever we will, we may do them good. And the good which we do to them, he will accept as done to himſelf. And the ſmalleſt charity performed in his name, will in no wiſe loſe its reward.

This principle will expreſs itſelf in a devout *attendance* on his *ordinances*, eſpecially on that which he inſtituted to awaken and perpetuate the remembrance of his dying love. As abſent friends delight



to reciprocate tokens of fidelity and affection, ſo the ſincere diſciples of Jeſus love to maintain a correſpondence with him by a religious obſervance of his day, and a pious celebration of his worſhip. They rejoice with thoſe who ſay, "Come, let us go up to the houſe of the Lord; he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." They love the aſſemblies of the ſaints, becauſe Chriſt has promiſed, that he will be in the midſt of them.

Love often looks beyond this world to that glorious ſtate, where the Redeemer is gone, and anticipates the happineſs to be enjoyed in his preſence. It is a part of the character of the ſaints, that "they love his appearing and kingdom, have their converſation in heaven, and thence look and wait for the Savior." Love to him will indeed make us willing to abide in the fleſh, as long as his ſervice requires; and while our minds are clouded with doubts, we ſhall chooſe to abide, becauſe we fear the conſequence of a departure. But whatever intereſts call our attention to this world, and whatever fears darken our paſſage to the other, ſtill, if love reigns and operates in us, we ſhall eſteem it good to be with Chriſt; we ſhall long for brighter diſplays of his glory, and ſtronger evidence of our ſincerity; we ſhall aſpire toward heaven, ſhall give diligence to the full aſſurance of hope, and follow them, who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes.

Theſe are the genuine operations of love to Chriſt.

IV. We will conſider the *benediction* connected with this temper. It is called *grace*, a term of large and glorious import. It comprehends all the bleſſings, which the goſpel reveals to the ſons of men, and promiſes to the faithful in Chriſt.

One great privilege contained in this grace is *juſtification* before God. Through faith, which works by love, we are juſtified freely by grace; and being juſtified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Another privilege is the *preſence* of the *Divine Spirit*. Chriſt ſays to his diſciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth, whom the Father will ſend in my name. He ſhall abide with you forever."—The Spirit often makes his viſits to ſinners in a way of conviction and awakening. Hence Chriſt ſays, "Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." But with thoſe who love him he makes his *abode*. to comfort them in their afflictions, guide them in their doubts, aſſiſt them in their duties, and preſerve them through all their dangers unto eternal life. Chriſt has promiſed, "They ſhall never periſh, and none ſhall pluck them out of his hands."

They who love Chriſt have *free acceſs* to the throne of grace, and a promiſe, that they ſhall be heard and accepted there. "By him they have acceſs by faith into that grace, in which they ſtand." —"If they abide in him, they may aſk what they will, and it ſhall be done unto them." We muſt remember, however, that there is a limitation of the promiſe. "If we aſk any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us; and if he hear us whatſoever we aſk, we have the petitions which we deſire of him."

Finally: They who love Chriſt in ſincerity, will receive the gift of a *happy immortality*. There is a crown of life, which the Lord has promiſed to them, who love him—a crown of righteouſneſs, which he will give to all who love his appearing. This grace paſſes all underſtanding. "Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared for them who love him."

How happy are the ſouls, who love our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity! They are delivered from the wrath to come. They are redeemed from the curſe of the law. They are within the protection of divine grace and under the ſecurity of an immutable

promiſe. They will, indeed, meet with afflictions, while they are in the fleſh; but all things are working for their good, and nothing will ſeparate them from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus their Lord.

This happineſs is not confined to any particular family, nation or age, but extended to all who love the Redeemer. In him there is no diſtinction of Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free; but all are one in him.

When a certain perſon, hearing Jeſus teach, exclaimed, "Bleſſed is ſhe who bare thee," he replied, "Yea, rather bleſſed are they, who hear the word of God and keep it." In his character as a Savior, he gave no preference to his relatives according to the fleſh; but declared, "Whoſoever ſhall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the ſame is my brother, and ſiſter and mother."

Let us often place the Lord Jeſus before our eyes, and contemplate his Spirit, doctrines and works, his ſufferings, reſurrection and interceſſion. Let us view him as repreſented in his word and in his ordinances, and by frequent converſe with him increaſe and ſtrengthen our love to him.

Let us prove the ſincerity of our love by obeying his precepts, promoting his intereſt, imitating his example, encouraging his friends, oppoſing his enemies, and attending on his ordinances. And let us remember, that it is not merely by calling him our Lord, and by eating and drinking in his preſence, but rather by doing his will, that we prove the ſincerity of our love, and aſcertain our title to his kingdom.

CONCLUSION.

I have now finiſhed that ſeries of diſcourſes, which I propoſed to deliver to you upon this rich and excellent Epiſtle of Paul to the Epheſians. I have endeavored to explain ſuch paſſages as ſeemed obſcure, have marked the connexion of one part with another, and have pointed out the inſtructions which the epiſtle itſelf naturally ſuggeſted. I have

aimed to give Paul's ſentiments in a plain and familiar manner, and to introduce *him* into the pulpit preaching the ſame goſpel, which he preached in Epheſus.

In the courſe of theſe meditations, all the great doctrines and duties of the chriſtian ſyſtem have come in our way; for the epiſtle is a compendium of the goſpel. It teaches us the fall and apoſtacy of man, and God's purpoſe concerning his redemption; the character of the Redeemer, and the manner in which he executed his work; the operation of the divine Spirit in applying this redemption; the nature and deſign of the chriſtian church, and of the goſpel miniſtry; the various duties which we owe to God, to Jeſus Chriſt, to the Divine Spirit, to mankind, to our fellow Chriſtians, and to ourſelves; how we ſhould regard the things of this world, and the things of the world to come; how we ſhould conduct in our ſecular calling and in all the particular relations of life; how we ſhould behave in times of affliction and temptation; and how we may enjoy the comforts of religion here, and ſecure the rewards of it hereafter.

It becomes us to inquire, what improvement we have made in knowledge and piety, while we have been attending to this epiſtle, and whether we have more deeply imbibed the ſpirit and ſentiment, which it has poured upon us.

In order to the recollection of what we have heard, it may be uſeful, that we ſit down, and read over this epiſtle with cloſe attention and ſelf application, with fervent prayer for the guidance of that Spirit, which leads into all truth, and with humble concern, that our hearts may be moulded into the temper here deſcribed.

And God grant, that we may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that we may approve the things which are excellent, and may be ſincere and without offence until the day of Chriſt.——AMEN.











